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THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE AND VIRTUES

CONSIDERED IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

BY
MGR. CHARLES GAY,
COADJUTOR TO THE BISHOP OF POICTIERS.

"Omnia et in omnibus Christus."—ST. PAUL

TRANSLATED FROM THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION, BY THE
SPECIAL PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR,

BY
THE RIGHT REV. ABBOT BURDER,
Order of the Reformed Cistercians.

VOL. II.

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THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL NAVY

FROM THE

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VOL. II.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL NAVY

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PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

THE translation of the second volume of Bishop Gay's great work, "On the Christian Life and Virtues, Considered in the Religious State," is now presented to the English reader. The third and concluding volume, will, it is hoped, shortly appear. The Translator is happy to say that the venerated Bishop has expressed his great satisfaction at the appearance of his work in an English dress, and also his approbation of the alterations the Translator has made in the arrangement of the work, as detailed in the Preface to the translation of the first volume.

May the perusal of the present volume inflame all Religious with the love of their holy state, with the most lively gratitude to our Lord for bestowing upon them the unspeakable grace of a Religious vocation, and with an ardent desire, with the Divine help, to act fully up to the holy and most grave obligations they have contracted.

May it inspire others also with a high esteem of this signal favour, which is indeed a clear mark of predestination, and the great means of fulfilling, so far as human frailty will permit, that petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."

FEAST OF THE
PRESENTATION OF THE BELSSED VIRGIN,

November 21st, 1878.

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ERRATA.

- p. 1, line 14 from top, *for* "payed," *read* "paid."
- p. 4, line 6 from bottom, *before* "been placed," *insert* "had."
- p. 42, line 16 from bottom, *for* "even after that, in concert with God, we have pronounced against the old man the sentence of death which he deserves. This sentence," &c., *read* "even after, that in concert with God we have pronounced against the old man. the sentence of death which he deserves, this sentence," &c.
- p. 73, line 17 from bottom, *for* "dissappear," *read* "disappear."
- p. 90, line 4 from top, *insert* a comma after "of which."
- p. 122, line 2 from top, *for* "proportionately," *read* "proportionally."
- p. 153, line 5 from top, *for* "recom-" *read* "recommend."
- p. 170, line 4 from top, *after* "challenges," *put* a hyphen, and continue "for what," &c.
- p. 183, line 15 from bottom, *for* "in," *read* "on."
- p. 237, line 12 from top, *for* "with nothing to do something," *put* comma after "nothing."
- p. 242, line 15 from top, *for* "that some," *read* "that Soul."
- p. 245, line 6 from bottom, *for* "reality," *read* "reality;" *after* reality, *for* "it," *read* "he."
- p. 246, line 11 from top, *put* a comma after "suppose," *leave out* "if."
- p. 269, line 8 from top, *for* "Yourself," *read* "Thyself."
- p. 280, line 14 from bottom, *for* "this, nor sacred," *read* "this Sacred Humanity."
- p. 282, line 10 from bottom, *for* "their coming," *read* "our coming."
- p. 292, line 4 from bottom, *for* "this abstract from them," *read* "all this, separate."
- p. 297, line 8 from top, *after* "safely;" *put* a comma instead of a semicolon.
- p. 303, line 12 from top *after* "death;" *put* a comma only; and *after* "when" a comma.
- p. 333, line 16 from top, *for* "He has His own word," *read* "he has his own word;" and *for* "He announces," *read* "he announces;" *for* "He establishes," *read* "he establishes."
- p. 337, line 9 from bottom, *for* "for," *read* "of."
- p. 364, line 11 from top, *after* "obedience," *put* a comma.
- p. 366, line 2 from bottom, *for* "so much heavier," *read* "so much the heavier."
- p. 382, line 15 from top, *for* "fevently," *read* "fervently."

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XI.

ON OBEDIENCE.

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ON MORTIFICATION.

THE Holy Scriptures everywhere represent to us the Christian Life, as a life which supposes, and which follows, a death. They compare this life to the ear, which issues from the grain, dead in the soil, into which the hand of the sower has cast it (St. John xii. 24). Christians, as to the soul, are truly among the risen; and the resurrection, says St. Paul, is from the dead (Philipp. iii. 11). Now, this tomb, which is our cradle—this death, from whence springs our life, is the tomb and the death of Jesus.

The death of Adam the sinner, did not lead of itself to life. Apart from the promises, it was simply a chastisement; and, though it was due to God in justice and payed thenceforth as a debt, it had not sufficient value to pay the creditor and to clear the debtor. In justice, it was less the penalty of sin, than the sign and the prelude of that penalty. The sin committed in time, had yielded a great produce beyond time. It had reached God Himself, and deranged in consequence, all the relations of the creature with the Creator. By turning man back in the midst of his way, sin changed for him his term; and the sepulchre, which after the lapse of days, more or less prolonged and evil, received the bodies of the children of Adam, was only, by right, the opening of

a gulf in which their souls were to be cast, never again to leave it. If, in fact, it might be otherwise for them ; if really such was not the lot of any of those who, having lived in penance, died in justice ; if, on the contrary, the reflection of the heaven of heavens, and the first dawn of the beatific vision commenced already to lighten up the dying couch of the Patriarchs and of all their children according to the spirit, the reason of this is, that immediately after the Fall, and in the very act which punished it, love, mingling with justice, had promised a Redeemer, and that the Lamb, immolating Himself from that time in the sublime sphere where He dwells, and where all times are present at once (Apoc. xiii. 8), His sacrifice had immediately left the passage free for mercy. It is this which brought pardon to our first parents, and re-opened the avenues of glory to them, and to all their descendants.

For them, then, as well as for us and for the whole human race, the Divine life to which God calls us all, and which He gives to those who are of good will, supposes the death of Christ, as the stream which fertilises a field, supposes the fissure in the rock from which it first issues. Jesus, the Infinite Life ; Jesus, the Universal Life, is only born among us, to die. His death was His great design, His principal work, the first object He set before Him to accomplish on this earth. It was His death which was the key-note of all His instructions, of all His miracles, and of all the successive mysteries which filled up the years He spent here below. What the sun is to the earth, lighting up all its surface and fructifying all its products, the Holy death of Jesus is to all the rest of His works. It gives them their perfect beauty, confers on them their supreme value, and by consummating

their excellence, imparts to them their actual and universal efficacy. But this death was unlike any other. Not only, whatever we can conceive in death of ignominy, and of suffering, was found in His death ; but further, it was all foreseen by Him Who submitted to it, foreseen as to its date, foreseen as to its circumstances, and with a clearness which we may well call frightful ; so much so, that in the soul of the Saviour this terrible vision was always before Him : it was a day on which the sun never set, and from its very dawn, it cast its light upon every thing around Him. On His side, Jesus never ceased to regard this sombre horizon of His life—not even during His sleep, when, His eyes being closed, His Heart was still watchful (Cant. v. 2). Finally, and this was the consummation of the suffering, this death was entirely voluntary : although it was the will of the Father that Jesus should be subjected to it, Jesus submitted to it of His own free will. *Isaias* had said of Him : “ He was offered up, because it was His own will ” (*Isaias* liii. 7) ; and, confirming this word of the Prophet, Jesus Himself said : “ No man taketh it (my life) away from me, but I lay it down of Myself (St. John x. 18). So that, in His long journey towards death, our Lord was not, like ourselves, necessarily urged on by age or by time : He moved forward under the sole impulse of His own Heart, and each step that He took was a new and considerate act of His love and of His liberty. All this makes His death without comparison, unlike any other, and also gives to all the life of Jesus, a character inexpressibly touching.

Now, this death of Jesus, by right and in principle, caused the death of the sin of our humanity, of which He deigned to constitute Himself the Head. Had it been even sweet and tranquil, the death of the Saint of

Saints was much more than an equivalent, not only for the debt contracted by Adam, but for that contracted by all the sins of His race. One single drop of the Blood of Jesus would have been sufficient to drown all the iniquities of the world—how much more, all that He shed while dying on the Cross ! This is why, in appearing for an instant to triumph, Satan was himself undone. The wicked blow with which he smote this mild and innocent victim, broke to pieces, most justly and for ever, the sceptre he had usurped since the fall of Adam, by the aid of which he ruled so tyrannically, as prince of sin and death, over all the generations of men; and for having raised his hand against the only One of that multitude who did not on any title belong to him, he lost all right over the rest of mankind who had deserved to become his subjects and his slaves.

Now, the justice of God, finding itself thus satisfied, sin being expiated, Satan dethroned, and death vanquished, life became again the sovereign mistress. The holy Humanity, on that lofty summit of Christ, in which it is united to the Person of the Word, remained henceforth, unattacked, because unassailable,—and so was it too not only with the soul of Jesus, which Satan and his ministers had never been able to reach, but even with that Body which they had covered with wounds, and which, after having received (for this once without feeling them) the tears, the kisses, and the loving cares of Mary, been placed in the sepulchre. For the divine life, after three days, came to reunite this soul and this body. It came to cause streams of light, of glory, and of beatitude, to flow over that Humanity just now crushed with shame and suffering. Then, having inundated the Head, it proceeded to overflow His members also, and giving

life to their soul, it resuscitated them from sin to justice, and deposited in their bodies the germ of that last resurrection, which, in finishing their resemblance to Jesus, was to accomplish their union with Him, and to consummate them all in God with Him. This is that grand triumph celebrated in both Testaments. "O Death, I will be thy Death," "O hell ! I will be thy bite," (Osee xiii. 14) "O death ! where is thy victory ? O death ! where is thy sting ? Thanks be to God Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 55). And by this means also, those waters began to flow and to run in every place, of which David said, "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5) and Isaïas, "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isaïas xii. 3), and after them Jesus saith, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (John vii. 27). "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever, and the water that I shall give him, shall become in him a fountain springing up to life everlasting" (St. John iv. 13).

Now, by the grace of Faith, the whole sacrifice of Christ is spiritually applied, and appropriated to us. This sacrifice, or rather, as St. Paul writes, Jesus Christ Himself sacrificed, enters into us, and dwells in us" (Ephes. iii. 17). He comes to us, and dwells in us, in the mystery, and in the power of His passion and of His death ; He comes to us, and dwells in us in the mystery and in the power of His resurrection. Baptism, which is rightly called the sacrament of faith, is only the communion of our whole being with the death and the risen life of Christ ; the rite visibly reproduces its image, since the baptised comes forth from the water in which he had at

first been plunged ;* but at the same time, grace reproduces in us its efficacy, since the baptised truly quits one life, to take another for it ; “ Know you not,” saith St. Paul to the Romans, “ that all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus, are baptised in His death ? for we are buried together with Him by baptism into death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life ” (Rom. vi. 3, 4).

Thus, by nature sharing in Adam’s responsibility, we all sin in him, in this sense, that deriving from him our origin, we contract the evil with which he was the first to be defiled, and consequently we are born sinners, and sold to death ; and this death which is the punishment of sin, but not its destruction, does not leave us, by itself, any hope of any future resurrection to the true life. But, co-heirs of Jesus, by grace, and becoming His members by faith, we are bound to the cross with Him, we die with Him and in Him, we pay in Him and by Him our debt : and as being free from sin, Jesus rose again to die no more (Rom. vi. 9), we also being freed, rise again to a life which is to be eternal ; being much more alive by this resurrection, than we were dead by the sin of Adam ; “ For not as the offence, so also the gift. For if by the offence of one, many died ; much more the Grace of God and the gift, in the grace of one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many . . . where sin abounded, grace does much more abound ” (Rom. v. 15, 20).

* Sicut ille qui sepelitur ponitur sub terrâ, ita ille qui baptisatur immergitur sub aquâ. Unde et in baptismo fit trina immersio, non solum propter fidem Trinitatis, sed et ad repræsentandum triduum sepulturæ Christi. Et sicut triduum sepulturæ Christi non facit nisi unam sepulturam, ita trina immersio non facit nisi unum baptisma. Et inde est etiam quod in Sabbato sancto solemnis baptismus in ecclesiâ celebratur.—St. Thom. in Epist. ad Rom., cap. vi., lect. 1.

Such then, is the condition of Christians in this world. Their life supposes both a death and a life, the death of Christ, and the risen life of Christ ; both of them passing into us, with the virtue peculiar to each, by means of grace and the sacraments ; the one rescuing us from sin, from lies, from Death, from Satan, from hell ; the other placing us in the truth, establishing us in justice, uniting us supernaturally to God, consecrating us to His service, surrendering us to His will, in fine, making us capable of growing, and helping us to grow in Jesus Christ, even to the perfection of His age, that is to say, until we become perfectly like to Him ; which renders us able and worthy to see the Face of God, and to enter into His glory.

But, as this life of Christ, which becomes our life of Grace, is given us only in its principle and in its substance, to be preserved and developed by our free will ; in the same way also this death of Christ, becoming our death to Satan and to his works, is deposited in us as a germ, that we must keep and cultivate, as a principle which it is necessary to apply to, and which ought to regulate, our conduct. There is then, for Christians, a culture and an operation of life, and at the same time a culture and an operation of death. And as this operation of life is our sanctification, that is to say, the action, always most free and most powerful, of that Holy Spirit which is in us and makes us live,* this operation of death is our mortification, that is to say, the action of this same Spirit which, ruling, exciting, and directing our spirit, removes us more and more from all that comes of evil ; from all that leads to it, and from all that is in any way connected with it.

From this you see that mortification is an essential law

* Spiritum sanctum Dominum et vivificantem.—Nicene Creed.

of Christianity, being the natural and necessary consequence of our incorporation in Christ, and one of the effects of our Holy Baptism. It comes from our Baptism as a character that marks us, as a precept that binds us, as an engagement to which we have subscribed, as a grace that is guaranteed to us, as a virtue which is infused in us. Whether it may and ought to vary in its applications, either as to the degree to which it obliges, or especially as to the particular acts that it commands, counsels, or inspires, is a different question ; but it follows, that in its principle, it is of universal obligation, and never admits of dispensation.

Thus considered, mortification includes humility, which, as you have seen, is the virtue that kills the frightful and profound evil, which is the fountain head of the three concupiscences, and which we call pride. We see also, that destroying in man all that God reproves in him, and denies him, it resumes the entire work of Christian abnegation ; and by the fact that it establishes us in the relations which God wishes us to have with nature and with ourselves, it ends practically in settling that grave question of the spiritual life, which we have called the starting-point.

We must determine first the matter of mortification, then study this virtue in its exercise, and following it in all its acts, give a precise account of its work. We shall have, afterwards, to point out to you its principal sources, I mean the different supernatural points of view, wherein it is fitting we should be placed, in order to exercise it in perfecting the particular truths, under the influence of which it manifests all its characteristics, declares itself under all its aspects, develops itself in every direction, and consequently the virtues which instigate it, sustain

it, and communicate to it their sap, which feed and expand its life, rendering its labour easy, and assuring at once its fecundity and perseverance. This is what we have thought we might call, its sources.

I.

The matter of Christian mortification, the domain in us which is assigned to it, the field of its operations, which are most frequently struggles, whose final success is always a triumph ; the matter, I say, of Christian mortification, is what the Scripture calls indifferently, the flesh, or the old man. But what is this flesh, and what are we to understand by the old man ? This is what we must first of all explain.

“God is a Spirit” said our Lord (St. John iv. 24) that is to say, all His Being is light, intelligence, and life. He is, indeed, a substance, and of an infinite solidity, but He is at once entirely simple, and absolutely immaterial. In a word, He is a Spirit, all Spirit, a pure Spirit.

Can we say then, that between God and flesh, no union, no relation, is possible ? and, as all flesh is a body, must we believe that between this pure Spirit, which God is, and bodies which are material, there is an incompatibility ? Yes, if it is a question of admitting that by essence, or by accident, there is in God the shadow of any kind of matter whatever ; no, if it is a question of a relation. This matter, in fact, God created ; He knows it then ; it has its type, its name, its rank, its object, in that Divine Intelligence, “In Whom all is life,” saith St. John, “even that which has not life in itself” (St. John i. 3).* And not only God knows matter, but he loves it, and with

* See the treatise of St. Augustine, and the commentary of St. Thomas on this passage.

such a love, that at last He espouses it ; not evidently for its own sake, but for the sake of man into whose nature it enters. By the fact of the Incarnation, flesh becomes the immediate organ of God, the form of His personal appearance in this world, the instrument of His most beautiful works, the channel of His choicest graces, the pledge of that last transport to which His love for us urges Him, the victim of His Sacrifice, and the centre of the glory which His dear creation renders to Him. What an honour ! what an employment ! what a destiny ! but first also, what a relation, and what a union !

Yet, in loving flesh, and to this excess, does He lower Himself ? No, certainly ; He raises it even to Himself ; it is not really, that He descends to it. Their alliance is, properly, a marriage, the truest, the most indissoluble of all marriages, and at the same time the most fruitful ; but this marriage is entirely virginal. Union in it implies neither confusion nor admixture ; God remains in it entire and inviolate. Possessing and penetrating flesh with His Humanity, more than the soul possesses and penetrates the body it animates ; nevertheless it does not even touch it ; no more than my thought touches my lips, when they express and transmit it. What God said of His Word, we must say of His action, it is “ spirit and life ” (St. John vi. 64). Action, say the scholastics, is of the same nature as the agent. God is a Spirit, it is then spiritually that He operates.

God is young also, essentially and eternally young. He is young, because He is a spirit, simple, unalterable, and unchangeable. He is young, because He lives altogether out of the range of time. His life does not glide away, it is not successive, it is in Him all entire, all at once, and always. He is young also, because being

His own proper principle, and not giving out of Himself, He never quits His source, and preserves thus all the freshness of the budding flower, with all its maturity and perfection, when full-blown ; for, being His own end, as well as His own beginning, He is as close to the one as to the other, and this is what secures for Him those other marks of youth, which are beauty and vigour.

Now this God Who is a spirit, this God Who is always young, has created man in His own image—not that man should or could be a pure spirit, his nature denies him this—but he may and ought to become spiritual ; and it was at first thus, that God made him resplendent with the free irradiations of the Word, rich with the gifts of the Holy Spirit ; the soul of Adam seemed to be only an organ of the Divinity, in frank and constant communication with God, lovingly subject to all His influences ; it was upright, regulated, peaceful ; it was free, and mistress of itself. Its powers were in such harmony, that their acts made a perpetual concert. As to his body, it was but the radiant form of that soul, all full of light, the ever docile instrument of a will ever reasonable, the expression, and as it were, the sacrament of a superior and inward life, of which God was the principle, the law, the model, and the end. Thus the whole of man was all light, intelligence, and life, which is his way of being all spiritual, and of reproducing, by imitating it, the spirituality of God.

Further, and for the same reason, man was young— young in soul, and young in body—his soul, living near to its source, received incessantly its outpourings. A sap of eternity penetrated it on all sides, and passing into all its acts, made even those which were the most humble and the most transitory, heavenly and imperish-

able realities. In man, and in his works, there was nothing which was not true and just; and it is the property of justice and of truth never to pass away" (Wisd. i. 15; Ps. cxvi. 2). Therefore, with what liberty, with what security, with what energy, he gave himself, to the noble labour with which God had charged him. Adam was here on earth, and by Divine commandment, a sower of light, a father communicating life, a pontiff diffusing sanctity, an artist clothing the whole world with beauty, flooding it with grace, and everywhere making harmony—in a word, a sort of earthly God, fashioning all things to his own image, as he himself had been created in the image of the Sovereign God. His body being subject to the soul, as the soul was subject to God, was not liable either to infirmity or to suffering. This body, in other respects, was unspeakably beautiful, and the light which enveloped it with its rays, was the only garment it had for a covering. Doubtless, at the expiration of a time known to God, Adam would have quitted this earth, but without having to pass through death, or even to be subject to old age. His passage would have been an ecstasy, and it is a new and the highest assertion of the Divine life, which raising him up from his first estate, would have sweetly and suddenly established him in Heaven.

Alas! seduced and vanquished by Satan, man has knowingly violated the law of God, forsaken Him, and betrayed his ministry. From the luminous heights of faith, he has precipitated himself over the declivities more and more obscure and slippery, of his own reason, to be plunged, and fatally, into the thick darkness of his senses. The visible appeared to him more true than the invisible; the carnal and perishable fruit that he held in his hand, more desirable than the eternal crown, which

he saw God holding out to him from on high. Deprived of the light which was to be his guide, and his salvation, his love necessarily went astray, and became perverted. His will let the sceptre fall; his liberty itself was alienated and sold. The body, created to obey, commenced to intimate its orders, and to tyrannise over its master; finally, the fellow-citizen of the angels, the brother of Christ, the son and heir of God, degraded himself to the level of the brutes" (Ps. xlviii. 13), like unto them, he lived upon his instincts, and fed himself with his sensations, so that, this son of the Holy Spirit, "who," saith St. Augustine, "should be spiritual even in his flesh, became fleshly even in his spirit."* By the same act, and as its inevitable consequence, his primitive integrity disappeared, his youth was marred, his beauty blighted, his strength weakened; burdened with sufferings, with shame, and with cares, his face became bent towards the earth, which he was henceforth to water with the sweat of his brow. The necessary servant of time, he became also its victim. Dead in his soul, he began forthwith to die in his body; he began to grow old; and progressing each day in his downward course, his lot, after passing through decrepitude, was to sink into the tomb, to become again, what he had at first been, ashes and dust.

Such, then, is "the *old man*:" a being ruined and falling into ruin, in whom, that which is not already corrupted and destroyed, exists only to corrupt and to die—a being who, keeping, it is true, his essence and all that was indispensable to his nature, has yet entirely changed his con-

* *Justa damnatio subsecuta est (peccatum) ut homo qui custodiendo mandatum futurus erat etiam carne spiritualis, fieret etiam mente carnalis, et qui suâ superbiâ sibi placuerat, Dei justitiâ sibi donaretur.*—St. Aug. De Civ. Dei., lib. xiv. cap. 15.

dition and has thrown it all into wreck and confusion from top to bottom, putting above what was below,—whence it comes that the Scripture, which names beings after their principal quality—that is to say, by that which rules and directs them—henceforth designates this fallen being as the carnal man, the animal man, or simply the flesh (Gen. vi. 3—12). Now, “What is born of the flesh, is flesh,” saith our Saviour (St. John iii. 6). Born of Adam, we are like him. What he has, he passes over to us ; what he is, we become ; so that the life we derive from Adam by our birth, and which is the natural life of the whole human race, although by reason of the soul (which is its primal principle, and which each holds immediately from God) it is specifically, a rational, and therefore a spiritual, life, yet in a moral point of view, and with regard to the last end, and in the appreciation of God, it is a life which is earthly, animal, and carnal.

It is true also that our regeneration in Christ does more than compensate our generation from Adam ; and as to that which in Adam is properly sin, is completely annulled in Christ (Rom. viii. 1). But as to all the rest that the first Adam transmits to us, the second Adam, though bringing it into subordination and subjection, yet allows it to remain. We are, then, far removed from original rectitude and peace. The Spirit who retakes His place in us, is able henceforth to preserve it, and His empire over us, only on condition of holding the sword, of always keeping it, and of often using it. In reality, to be a man, and especially to be a Christian, is to live in a state of division, of separation, and of intestine war. The flesh, in each of us, lusteth against the spirit, and in the same way the spirit lusteth against the flesh (Gal. v. 17). We are all like Rebecca, in whose womb two infants, or

rather two races and two peoples, struggled together, as we read in Genesis (Gen. xxv. 24). We lead two lives at once—two lives that are contradictory, hostile, and incompatible. Each of them is mighty and obstinate—the more so because each has its claim, the first asserting a veritable right of birth; the second, opposing to this claim its essential superiority, its all-heavenly origin, and the express will of God. For, with the old man, which comes from Adam, and the new man, which is Jesus living in us and we living in Jesus, there is precisely the same struggle as that between Esau and Jacob. God loves Jacob and hates Esau; and the elder, the first in birth, shall serve the younger (Malach. i. 2, Rom. ix. 13).

It is in this point of view that we must place ourselves in order thoroughly to prove the field of Christian mortification and to estimate its value. The old man, or the flesh, which, as we have said, is the proper object of this virtue, is neither the body by itself nor the soul by itself; it is the whole man, such as is born of Adam, with its two-fold life, moral and physical.* It is this natural man which remains always as long as the man himself, even after the grace of Christ has raised us up again and cured and deified us. It is this man whose instincts are fixed on the earth, eager for its happiness, greedy for its pleasures; it is this man who has his sympathies with the world, and who has his relish and his spirit, for whom

* *Homo vetus dicitur tam interior, quam exterior, qui subjicitur vetustati quantum ad animam per peccatum, et quantum ad corpus, quia membra corporis sunt arma peccati. Et sic subjectus homo peccato, secundum corpus et animam, dicitur vetus homo, secundum quod illa vetusta sunt quæ sunt in viâ corruptionis, vel in ipso corrumpi.*—St. Thomas in Epist. ad Ephes., cap. iv. sect. 7.

thenceforth the world is fatally an obstinate flatterer, an accomplished seducer, a tempter always as dangerous as indefatigable. It is this man, in a word, in whom Satan, even after he has been chased away, finds still traces of himself, and it is this man who holds with the demon all sorts of secret affinities. It is against this man that the Holy Spirit operates and struggles incessantly, applying to him the virtue of the holy death of Jesus in concert with the faithful soul who is here, as in every virtuous and meritorious work, His responsible minister and His indispensable instrument. It is this man, so full of life and so vivacious, that we must entirely and always mortify, reducing him practically to inability, to inactivity, and to the sterility of death, preventing him from bearing his fruit, which is sin, and frustrating his action in all our moral life.

It follows from this, that mortification, which is one in its principle, has however a double form, and extends to a two-fold object. It embraces the exterior and the interior of man; and according as its exercise falls upon the one or the other, it is itself, exterior or interior, corporal or spiritual. To mortify but a part of oneself, as we do, it may be by system, or only from cowardice, is almost losing one's time. In fact, whether the old man lives in us, because, though we are still good in certain respects, our sensual appetites are irregular, or whether, on the contrary, this old man lives in us, because though our body remains sober and continent, the soul is given up to avarice, to ambition, or to some other similar passion, in reality, it is the same thing. If in one way or in the other, this life predominates in us, the life of Jesus necessarily dies in us. In both cases, doing the works of the flesh, we become flesh ourselves,

and a divine sentence excludes us from the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. xv. 50). In fact it is not only the irregular sensual acts which St. Paul classes in the number of works of the flesh, but also hatred, jealousy, envy, idolatry, and all the evil that the unrestrained passions of the soul inspire (Gal. v. 19). And do you know to what the clear-sighted Augustine reduced the life of the flesh? He says that, in brief, it consists in living in oneself and for oneself, that is to say, that it all lies in the independence of the will, and in the selfishness of the heart.*

Thus then, they are greatly deceived, who make the whole or the principal part of mortification to consist in afflicting the senses, and in the penance of the body. But they are not less in error, who wish to reduce all to interior mortification, which is one of the most common errors of our age. It is an extremely dangerous error; for whether by the fact of a real hypocrisy (which is more common in the world, than the world is willing to allow), or in consequence of an illusion which even Christian people do not know how always to avoid, the pretence of which we speak, commonly cloaks a real and complete abandonment of this indispensable duty; and even where it does not cloak it, it leads to it, by an easy and almost inevitable descent.

Doubtless there is an order in this matter, as in every thing else that God does, and in all His arrangements (Rom. xiii. 1). Interior mortification is evidently of a

* Hæc vitia quæ tenent in Diabolo principatum, carni tribuit Apostolus, quam certum est diabolus non habere. Non habendo carnem quam non habet diabolus, sed *vivendo secundum seipsum* factus est homo similis diabolo; quia et ille secundum se vivere voluit quando in veritate non stetit.—St. Augus., De Civit. Dei, Lib. xiv. cap. 3. Quod ergo est, ambulare secundum hominem hoc est esse carnalem.—*Id. Ibid.* cap 4.

higher value than exterior mortification, not only in dignity, but also in importance. To prove this, we have only to consider the superiority of the soul to the body. But further, it is in the soul that all concupiscence has its root, and that the old man has, consequently its substance and its life. It is not the corruptible flesh, writes St. Augustine, which makes the soul to sin ; it is, on the contrary, the sinful soul, which has made the flesh corruptible.* The soul also, exclusively, is the residence of that concupiscence which, of all the three, is the most opposed to God, the most diabolical, and the most fatal, namely, pride. Lastly, in interior mortification, there is no dispensation, and no exception, whilst exterior mortification ought sometimes to be altogether omitted, at least that which is afflictive.

But with this reservation, it remains a great truth, that Christian mortification is essentially two-fold, as man is so, on whom it is exercised. It is a solid truth, that without this two-fold mortification, corporal and spiritual, the old man, or the flesh, is not sufficiently overcome ; that without this double mortification the flesh cannot be—I do not say destroyed, as it will be in the end—but reduced to order, and kept in awe. It is also a truth, that without corporal mortification, practised I mean, in a greater or less degree, but yet really and habitually practised, it is not only difficult, but impossible, to arrive at sanctity, to advance in virtue, and consequently to be a true Religious, or even a true Christian. You see then, why, from Adam, who by order of God had to carry in his flesh, and all the days of his life, the rigid penance which was the punishment of his fault, to St. Paul, who,

* Non caro corruptibilis animam facit peccatricem, sed anima peccatrix fecit corruptibilem animam.—Aug. loco. cit., cap. 3.

under the action of the Holy Spirit, chastised his body, and brought it into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 7), the mortification of the body has always been considered as a divine and rigorous obligation; the Church has always, and in all places, taught its necessity, and imposed its practice on all her children.

Mortify, then, your body, your senses, and all your life.* St. Paul speaks of our members and of our body, as of so many arms and instruments in the service of sin (Rom. vi. 13); and St. James calls them “the warfare of concupiscence” (St. James iv. 1). All these members may serve us for good; all may serve us for evil. There is nothing in this body so wonderfully manifold, not a sense, not a fibre, not a drop of blood, not a feature of the face, not a smile of the lips, which is not capable of taking its part in the frightful conspiracy, which, from the bottom of the soul where it resides, the triple concupiscence plots incessantly against the work of Jesus in us. There is nothing, which, under the inspiration of this darksome and odious power, does not always tend, more or less, to this supreme evil of sin, and which is not employed in its service with docility, ease, and promptitude. It has been said of man, and

* A pious and learned author, a friend of St. Bernard, has very well said,—“Certainly it is not to the body, but to the soul that our vices ought to be imputed, since it is the soul, and it alone, which is the principle of sensation, of movement, and of the body’s life. . . . But the soul makes use of the body as the artisan makes use of the hammer and of the anvil; and as, by the aid of these tools, the artisan makes statues and idols, so also by the aid of the body, the soul forges for her own use, shameful joys, and culpable pleasures. . . . The flesh is the workshop of the soul, which in it, and by its means, accomplishes and consummates her own desires.” Arnald. abb. Bonævall. De Cardinalibus Operibus Christi. Migne. Patrolog., vol. clxxxix.

especially in his physical nature, that he is a treasure of suffering. The fact is, that each of our muscles, each of our many nerves, may become for us the cause of a real punishment ; and then, how can we deny that we are wonderfully organised to suffer ? Alas ! if man is a great treasure-house of suffering, let us admit that he is also, and first of all, a great arsenal of sin ; and not only by the diversity of the conceptions and the combinations, which our mind employs in the service of the innumerable and insatiable passions of our heart, but also by the astonishing abundance of means with which the variety and power of our organs furnish the will to execute its designs. Now, the proper work of mortification is to pursue sin everywhere, and to arrest its course, to hinder its fruits, to destroy its germs, to combat all its principles—in a word, to abolish, and to annihilate it.

Mortify then your senses, all your senses. It is not a question here, you understand, of interdicting the use of them ; that is not possible, and it would be absurd to enjoin it upon you. But, first, you should regulate this use, and regulate it according to the double law which governs us, the natural law, and the supernatural. This will lead us on very far in the order of mortification. It costs us something, alas ! not to commit sin, and we only avoid offending God on the condition of doing violence to, and of overcoming ourselves. Nevertheless we must do more : we ought, of our own free will, to add to the law, and to restrict even the liberty which, apart from sin, it accords to the life of the senses. Certainly sobriety is a mortification ; but who, if he is only sober, will venture to assert that he is mortified ? Poor sobriety, indeed ! That sobriety would be frail and exposed to danger, which was not protected by habitual mortification. We must,

then, deprive ourselves, and sometimes at the expense of positive suffering. And these rules ought to be applied to the special mortification of each sense.

Mortify your eyes, forcing them not to look at objects except in the measure which the Spirit of Grace will permit you. Close them, always, at every sight that is dangerous, and also have the courage to do it at every sight which is vain and of no utility. Go so far as to wean yourselves sometimes from those lively and dear joys which we derive from what is brilliant and new, from what is rare or curious; or still more, from the beautiful and gracious forms, whether of Nature or of art. Know how, when occasion offers, to make some sacrifice in the enjoyment of that light of the sun in which we live, and which, as St. Augustine says, "so beneficent to all, so pure for those who are pure, yet sets off this life for the blind children of this world with intoxicating and perfidious delights."* For example, support patiently those cheerless days which the high walls of your monasteries sometimes cause you to pass; and if you find that the sun never visits your community room or your cell, count it as a gain and as a joy. What roots of sin will you not destroy in the garden of your soul by thus mortifying your eyes! What degrees of brightness within will this voluntary blindness without procure you! How they will aid you to practise modesty, recollection, prayer, liberty of spirit, the habitual and intimate communion with God!

Making yourselves thus blind for the love of the Kingdom of Heaven, make yourselves deaf also, when

* *Ista lux corporalis . . . illecebrosâ et periculosâ dulcedine condit vitam sæculi cæcis amatoribus. Qui autem et de ipsâ laudare te norunt adsument eam in hymno tuo, non absumuntur ab eâ in somno suo. Sic esse cupio.*—Confess., lib. x., cap. 34.

it is fitting. Keep your ears closed to proposals that flatter, to praises, to seductions, to bad counsel, to idle tales; to everything which declares, extols, or recalls the spirit of the world, the charm of the present life, the joys of false liberty, the pretended rights of nature, or finally, the wisdom which is criminal and earthly. And because we are treating now of the senses, beware of pleasures which come to us by the sense of hearing. Do not listen to songs which trouble or enervate the soul, and which cause you to dream and sigh. St. Augustine, when a bishop, heard none but sacred music, and yet, knowing the exceeding sanctity of God, and what a little it requires to sully the soul, he sometimes interrogated himself on this point; and, accusing himself before his brethren, at the same time that he accused himself before God, he wrote: "Sensible charms often deceive me when the faculty of hearing gets weary of following reason, and though naturally made so as to obey it, it strives to go before and to direct it. . . . If I happen to be more touched with the music than with the sense of the words that are sung, there is in this a fault which merits punishment, and then I would cease to listen to it."*

What shall I say of the smell? I have no need, I am sure, to recommend you not to use scents, nor to dissuade you from seeking for its own sake, the miserable pleasure that these perfumes may bring you, but I will

* *Delectatio carnis meæ, cui mentem enervandam non oportet dari, sæpe me fallit, dum rationem sensus non ita comitatur, ut patienter sit posterior; sed tantum quia propter illam meruit admitti, etiam præcurrere ac ducere conatur. Ita in his pecco non sentiens, sed postea sentio. . . . Cum mihi accidit ut me amplius cantus quam res quæ canitur moveat, pœnaliter me peccare confiteor, et tunc mallem non audire cantantem.*—*Confess., lib. x., cap. 33.*

exhort you to mortify this sense as the other senses ; and, if you have thus anything to suffer, as may easily happen in community life, by reason of certain infirmities or maladies of one's neighbour, far from making this any ground of complaint, draw from it a holy joy. Ah ! think of what our Divine Saviour had to endure, sometimes from the crowds that were around Him, from so many sick and diseased persons who thronged Him, and sometimes from the wretched dwellings where His apostolic life often obliged Him to lodge ! It is said of St. Philip Neri, that he perceived physically the sins of those who approached him, and especially their sins against modesty !* It is extremely probable that Jesus had this supernatural perception, and, consequently, He would have it in the highest degree. I leave you, then, to guess what were the revolts, the disgust, and in truth the torture He thus suffered in His conversation among men, through the sense of smell.

The place that abstinence and fasting hold in the Divine and Ecclesiastical laws, and the much greater share they have in your religious life, sufficiently instruct you, on the obligation you are under to mortify the taste. There are some demons, which, according to the saying of our Lord, defy all spiritual power whatever, without the addition of fasting (St. Mark ix. 28). Though gluttony is a shameful sin, and though every virtuous person regards it as such, yet is one of the most common sins of our poor humanity. Is it, because, contrary to so many laws, the first sin of Adam, violated also that of temperance ? This wound is general at all times among the children of Adam, and so deep, that when most other wounds are

* See the legend in the Roman Breviary. The same thing is said of St. Mary Magdalen, of Pazzi.

already closed, this continues open. And would to God that at least this vice were never found among those whom the frugality and the austerity of a conventual table would seem to preserve, not only from sin, but even from the occasion and the temptation of committing it ! Watch, then, continually over your appetite, and fight incessantly against gluttony. For there are enemies which we may fly from, and never meet again, but this is an enemy with which a struggle is inevitable. It is a necessity for all, that it should begin again each day, and at different times in the day.

As to what regards the quality of the food, perhaps you have little concern ; like the disciples of the Saviour, you have ordinarily to eat only what is set before you (St. Luke x. 8). I do not mean, that at all times, even on this point, you may not, and ought not, to practise mortification, whether it be passive or active. Where sensuality may creep in, how should mortification be impossible ? But in short, it is to Religious, as to people of the world, and even still more so in certain respects, that the wise rule laid down by St. Francis, of Sales, is applicable—"It is better to eat everything indifferently, than always to choose the worst."* He does not say "never choose the worst," only he does not approve of our choosing it always, and the reason he gives for it is, that in doing so, we sacrifice our choice. Moreover, though you have nothing to do with the quality of the food, there is still the question of the quantity you may take. In this matter much is left to discretion and obedience. Without discretion, and thinking only of doing penance, you would run a great risk of becoming imprudent, and God knows to what a point this may reach. Weak, or ruined

* Introd. to the Devout Life, Part iii., chap. 23.

health, is always a hard trial, particularly in a monastery, as it prevents the observance of the rule, and of the common exercises ; but when the cause of lost health, is a continued imprudence, having, consequently, its source in self-will, this state of sickness exposes the soul to a multitude of terrible temptations ; and aided by the malice of the devil, it frequently happens that courage fails, that hope gives way, that the rule is found to be too severe, and the duty of keeping it impossible ; and it may be, that a religious life, commenced with fervour, ends in a breaking of the vows, which is a sort of apostasy. In spite of this, under obedience, and in the vast field which even in the actions which it regulates, it leaves to your liberty, keep a tight rein on the need you have to eat and drink. Often pray to God, pray to Him every day, to hinder you, by His grace, from passing the limits of necessity, and following the attraction of pleasure, to which you never give way without leaving a stain upon the soul. How happy I am to quote here a passage from our great Augustine ! The world admires his genius ; but see if there is not occasion also to admire his conscience ? “ You have taught me, said he to God, to take food only as a remedy ; but when I pass from the disquiet of want, to the repose which follows its satisfaction, the snare of concupiscence attends me on the way. It is so difficult to discern, if we grant a succour to the necessary needs of nature, or are guilty of some excess in yielding to the perfidious solicitations of concupiscence ! our poor soul is pleased with this uncertainty, and is charmed to find in it an excuse for covering with the pretext of health, a culpable complacency. O my God ! I strive every day to resist the temptation ; I call upon Thee to aid me with Thy Right Hand, and to Thee I refer

all my perplexities. O Lord ! who is he among us who does not in this matter sometimes overstep the limit ? If there is such a one, I declare that he is a great man, and that he ought to give great glory to Thy Name. For myself, I am not this man, but one who is a sinner ; and yet even I glorify Thy Name, being sure that He Who has overcome the world intercedes before Thee for my faults, and that, notwithstanding them all, He deigns to count me among the weak members of His Body.* What confusion is this humble anxiety of the holy Doctor, to the generality of the people of the world, in a matter in which they hold that only for the most shameful excesses is anyone to be blamed ; and also what a lesson for you !

I come now to the last sense, which is that of touch. In certain respects this is the most gross of all the senses ; it is also the most widely spread, since it extends over the whole body ; and in the long annals of sin, who shall count the number of pages which have

* Hoc me docuisti ut quemadmodum medicamenta, sic alimenta sumpturus accedam. Sed dum ad quietem satietatis ex indigentia molestia transeo, in ipso transitu mihi insidiatur laqueus concupiscentia. Ipse enim transitus voluptas est, non est aliud quam transeat quo transire cogit necessitas. . . . Et saepe incertum fit utrum adhuc necessaria corporis cura subsidium petat, an voluptaria cupiditatis fallacia ministerium suppetat. Ad hoc incertum hilarescit infelix anima, et in eo praeparat excusationis patrociniū, gaudens non adparere quid satis sit moderationi valetudinis ut obtentu salutis obumbret negotium voluptatis. His tentationibus quotidie conor resistere et invoco dexteram tuam ad salutem meam et ad te refero aestus meos. . . . Et qui est, Domine, qui non rapiatur aliquantum extra metas necessitatis ? Quisquis est, magnus est, magnificet nomen tuum. Ego autem non sum quia peccator homo sum. Sed et ego magnifico nomen tuum : et interpellat me pro peccatis meis qui vicit saeculum, numerans me inter infirma membra corporis tui.—Confess., lib. x., cap. 31.

been written about it? Here, then, is considerable room for the holy labours of mortification. There are certain objects which this virtue ought to make you avoid, and even fly from; there are others which it will make you bear with patience; there are others which it will make you seek after and practise with courage.

First, in order to mortify this most dangerous sense, you must shun everything which might, more or less, offend against the holy and delicate virtue of chastity, or even only tarnish it. You must avoid all sensual contact, however slight, every caress in which there is any passion in which you would seek or would take any joy which would come mainly from the sense of touch. What we must bear with is everything which naturally is an affliction to the flesh, especially the cold of winter, the heat of summer, a poor and coarse habit, a hard bed, and all inconveniences of the same kind. Without falling into extreme rigour or becoming ridiculous, which would sometimes be trying to other people, do not complain seriously of anything. Be contented with all weathers; show a smiling countenance at all its changes, saying, that whatever the weather outside may be, it is always seasonable to love God and to be employed in His service. Bear in silence and bear in secret the many inconveniences and privations of the religious life, and always appear the most contented person in the world. Finally, what you must seek after and practise are corporal penances, giving the first place, as a matter of course, to the penance your Rule imposes, and regulating all other penances by competent authority. To have recourse to this control is a duty of great importance, and you ought never to dispense yourselves from it. Call to mind those fasts.

of the Jews which God rejected because they were fasts of their own will (Isaias lviii. 3). Patience must suffice to bear what you have necessarily to endure ; here, as I have told you, courage is necessary. There is a valour belonging to soldiers ; there is also a religious valour. Ah ! how the saints excelled in this valour ! Pray God to instil it into you by giving you His Spirit of Fortitude, and when you have received it preserve it most carefully. This valour lives in the soul by what it makes it do ; it is an exquisite salt to season its sacrifices ; it is the law, said our Saviour, "that every victim shall be salted with salt" (Mark ix. 48). In truth, this valour is only the energy of love, the sign of its intensity, the flame of its zeal ; see then how desirable it is !

Thus it is the whole body which is to submit and keep constantly submissive to this law of mortification ; like St. Paul and the first Christians, who carried always in their bodies the mortification of Christ (2 Cor. iv. 10). You will make great progress in this work if you take continual care to mortify each of your senses ; but, you will certainly bring it to perfection, if you habituate yourselves every day to three other more general practices, and first to that of watching. Regulate your sleep, avoiding all cowardice, all idleness, all effeminacy, and especially in the morning. Do not make a moment's delay when the bell gives the signal. The time of waking up in the morning, is one of the great moments of the day, and justly so, because it is our first moral act. You know in all things the importance of beginnings, "If the first-fruit be holy, saith St. Paul, so is the lump also ; and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Rom. xi. 16). And so also if the waking-up be manly, the day will be so too. As regards vigils properly so-

called, it has always been the custom of the saints to keep them ; and, how often do we read in the Gospel that such was the example of our Lord ! How many entire nights did He spend in prayer ! We ought to imitate Him in this, as in all the rest. However, what I said to you touching the need of control, I repeat here, and still more urgently ; for, with certain temperaments, and especially at a certain age, there is hardly any penance more injurious to the health than this—of watching.

The second general mortification which I ought to recommend to you, is work. The Holy Spirit tells us, that we cannot give ourselves too much meditation or too frequent study without some suffering to the flesh (Eccles. xii. 12). All of you, then, who by the grace of God and the fact of your holy vocation, consecrate so many hours every day to prayer or to sacred studies, all of you, I say, fall under this law ; and it is a double gain, that in making your meditation you are doing penance. However, what I wish now to speak to you about is the labour of the body, and what the old monastic constitutions call "*holy manual labour*." All of you are obliged to work, you are bound to manual labour ; under one form or another there is no religious order in which it is not a part of the rule. But, I say to you, give yourselves generously to it, spare yourselves no trouble, nor complain of it ; the more because being of service to yourselves you also benefit the community. Think, you who are voluntarily poor, of the share of work which falls upon those poor who are forced to work. These do it to gain their bread, let your object be to please God, to sanctify your soul, and to gain Heaven.

Once more, receive with docility, support with

humility, patience, and perseverance, the great mortification of sickness. If other mortifications may be likened to silver, this is like gold, because though all in it comes from us, since it comes from sin, yet, looking at it in another important point of view, and in as much as all that happens depends on the Providence of God, sickness is sent and ordered by Divine appointment. Also, how just are its attacks ! How efficacious it is ! How, better than manual labour, and all voluntary penances, it cuts to the quick the old man in us, and truly rescues us from ourselves. I venture to say that patience in sickness, and especially a long sickness, is the master-work of mortification, and consequently the triumph of mortified souls. But for those who are not so mortified, it is the sepulchre and burying-place of illusions. How many pretended virtues then evaporate in smoke, and the heart shows itself free from disguise ? Then appears an excessive delicacy, and in consequence, a detestable bad temper ; then is manifested an universal grumbling and a discontent with everybody ; such do not suffer anything without a groan. They are full of wants ; the doctor never comes often enough, proper remedies are not at hand, those which are given, are not sufficiently special and expensive ; such and such remedies would be evidently the best to use, and would be followed by a perfect cure and the recovery of health. Heaven and earth are moved to give the least relief. Is all this being mortified ? Is this suffering as a good Religious ? We cannot read, without being touched, the chapter of the Monastic Constitutions, in which the founders of a religious order have regulated the care of the sick. This is particularly true of the Constitutions of St. Teresa. By the side of a wisdom which is all holy,

and of that religious understanding which she had in so excellent a degree, we find also a perfect charity, a tender compassion, an exquisite kindness. But it is well to see also with what warmth, and with what spirit, she rallies in her "Way of Perfection," those delicate Religious who cannot bear the least pain, who make any little uneasiness a reason for asking for a dispensation, and who, she says, seem to have entered a convent with no other intention than that of endeavouring not to die ! Oh ! all you who are stretched in this cross of sickness, or are only touched by it, remember that in this time so favourable to the acquisition of virtue, and when our Lord is so eager to reap in you an abundant harvest, it is to your sisters, on whom you depend, or who render you their assistance, that the sweet task is confided of pitying, of alleviating, of easing your maladies ; but, that your part, I mean your duty and your grace, is to bear them patiently in union with Him, who, mild and silent as a lamb, has truly "borne all our infirmities, and carried all our sorrows" (Isai. liii. 4).

To conclude, act judiciously in all things. The body is a servant, and no one will accuse us of telling an untruth if we say that this servant is naturally idle and intractable. We must not, doubtless, weaken it too much, for which it may furiously avenge itself, making us pay dearly for it afterwards. Stags are bad runners at two periods, says St. Francis of Sales : when they are overloaded with venison, and when they are too thin and poor. We are greatly exposed to temptations when our body is too well cared for, and when it is too much reduced : for too much indulgence renders it insolent in its ease, and too great a neglect makes it despond in its want of ease ; and as we cannot carry it well when it is

too fat, so it cannot carry us well when it is too lean. So that in general, concludes this holy saint, whom we may call with good reason the doctor of discretion, it is better to keep up more bodily strength, than you actually need rather than to weaken it more than is necessary ; for we may always lower it when we wish, but we cannot always get up again its strength when we wish.* But taking care not to weaken the body, which is a fault, on the whole, that is seldom committed, beware especially of flattering it, which is, on the contrary, exceedingly common ; and when you find it ever so little following its inclination to play the master, immediately treat it as if it were a slave. It is of this inevitable servitude, as much and more than of other servitudes, that the Holy Spirit speaks, when He gives us this sage advice, and lays down for us these rules : “ He that nourisheth his servant delicately from his childhood afterwards shall find him stubborn ” (Prov. xxix. 21) ; “ Fodder and a wand and a burden are for an ass, head and correction and work for a slave ; ” “ The yoke and a thong bend a stiff neck, and continual labours bow a slave. Torture and fetters are for a malicious slave ; send him to work that he be not idle ; set him to work, for so it is fit for him ” (Eccles. xxxiii. 25, 28). O, holy and salutary severity of the word of God ! happy is he who comprehends it ! More happy he who relishes it, feeling the immense and unchangeable love hidden under these appearances of severity ! Happy above all the rest is he who makes them the constant rule of his thoughts, of his sentiments, and of his actions !

Now, I have already told you that whatever we do to mortify our body and our senses, it will be of little

* Introduction to the Devout Life, part iii., chap. 23.

account if we do not also mortify the soul. It is true that by reason of the natural unity of man the soul is affected whenever the body is punished by Christian penance; still as the enemy is within, though in the combat he makes use of the senses, as the designs which are manifested and are accomplished by the outward organs are first conceived in the heart and spring from it, it is on the soul and on its powers that we must make the principal attack in combating sin, and must pursue it with that cross on which Jesus died. "There is much ground," says St. John of the Cross, "for bewailing the ignorance of those who, neglecting to mortify their passions, think they shall be able to fit themselves for the Divine union by a multitude of penances and other extraordinary practices with which they burden themselves."*

And to commence with that part of our soul which is the most closely allied to the senses, mortify first of all, your imagination. The imagination is the treasure of the eyes, the place where we lock up and guard their conquests. Thanks to the imagination, we continue to see what we no longer behold with our bodily eyes; we remain in open day when the night has long since gathered round us; we conjure up things that are absent; we restore to life that which is dead; in a word, we inherit and carry in us real worlds. All that I have said to you of outward sights, apply to those that are inward. Ah! how easily does this magnificent power of regarding interiorly all that has passed exteriorly, when ill-regulated, become to us a source of temptations, of errors, and of faults! What ceaseless incitement to curiosity! These dangerous visions to which the earth

* Ascent of Mount Carmel, bk. i., chap. 8.

and the world oblige us to submit, how long they last, and with what violence do they seize upon our imaginations, even when we have ceased voluntarily to heed them ! I have no need to prove to you the power of these images : those which are holy, elevate the soul ; but those which are unholy, to what depths do they sometimes cause us to descend ! Mortify then this inward eye. Cover with the darkness of night all that would obscure in you the bright light of virtue. And because images are the food of dreams, and an ill-regulated imagination is the mother of idle fancies, mortify without pity this need of musing, so imperious in certain natures. A Religious who is given to musing, and indulging her fancy, will never be a perfect Religious, and will always be in danger of becoming more than imperfect. Between a mind given to dreams, and one that is given to reflection, there is all the difference which exists between a novelist and a philosopher. Reflection, meditation, and especially contemplation, raise us near to heaven, and conduct us to God ; indulging in idle musing makes us fall over frightful precipices, and casts us headlong into the abyss.

What the imagination is to images, the memory is to all spiritual realities, to ideas, and to events. We must exercise our reason on the one and on the other, and regulate and mortify in us the power of memory, as well as the power of imagination.

The hold sin might have on your memory, give it all to virtue ; all that Satan may make use of, give to Jesus, and let it belong exclusively to Him.

Keep a restraint on your sensibility : do not allow yourself to be overcome by your impressions ; be firm, be reasonable. Ah ! though reason is the property of our nature, we cannot generally listen to it, follow it, and

let it rule over our actions, without an effort, a combat, a victory ; that is to say, without we overcome, and inflict a wound, a wound causing death, and this the death necessarily of a portion of ourselves. If you do not soon and courageously vanquish your sensibility, the religious life will become a torment to you, and, what is still worse, you will find it to be a constant temptation, and a continually recurring sin. Let me keep silence on the occasion you will thus become of suffering to others. Certainly, I do not say you should be without feeling ; supposing that this were possible, it would not be well. Our Lord was not without feeling, nor His holy Mother. But I tell you to be like them, in all circumstances ; to be wise and calm, and always to possess your soul as they possessed theirs. Mortify yourselves with the greatest care in the matter of impatience, of irritation, and especially of anger. What becomes of you when your soul escapes your hold ? What is a reasonable being, when he has no longer any reason ? What is a man who has no longer his understanding ? Distrust also your desires, do not follow them, saith the Scripture (Eccles. xviii. 20) ; it is as if it said to you, go before them, make them submit to reason, to direction. Let them not be in you, like a horse that has run away with both carriage and driver. In short, never let the feelings of human nature degenerate into passion—let everything live and act, but in its place, and in its order, seeking its true end, by the faithful accomplishment of its own law.

Nothing is so immoderate as the heart of man ; nothing is so averse to a just measure ; either it remains contented with less than is its due, through idleness, pusillanimity, and distrust ; and this is *self*, under one form or another ;

or else it exceeds all limits, by enthusiasm, impetuosity, and a kind of intoxication. Oh ! what a work has the mortifying cross of Jesus to do in our hearts ! St. Augustine has said : “ Virtue is the order of love.”* Vice, sin, evil, is then the disorder of love, it is love in disorder. Watch over all that is within you, but over nothing so much as your affections. It is to this the wise man alludes, in these words : “ Blessed is the man that is always fearful ” (Prov. xxviii. 14). Fear your affections—what they are, is what you are. “ I am suspicious of my love,” said the blessed Angela of Foligno, “ more than of anything else. It contains all good, and all evil. I suspect the love I have for God ; I suspect the love I have for my neighbour ; for what was good, may become bad.”† Your certainty in this matter, is a very exact mortification, and, in one respect, there is nothing else that will avail ; and because, that in this matter, the need of enjoyment is so intense, and the danger of excess is so great, it is clear that we must practise detachment, and wean ourselves, more than we do in other things ; I say more heartily, and more courageously. The occasions of doing so will not be wanting, nor the means. God, who knows your necessities, has richly provided you on this point ; but you must aid His good will, for He respects your liberty, and never dispenses you from co-operating.

Have I said or insinuated, in writing these lines, that He has forbidden you to be kind-hearted, and to show that you are ? Ah ! I abhor the thought ! The contrary would rather be the order of God—and how could you

* *Mihi videtur, quod definitio brevis et vera virtutis, ordo est amoris.*—St. August. *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xv., cap. 22.

† *Her Life*. Chap. 64. Translated into French by E. Hello.

flatter yourself that you resemble Jesus Christ, if you had a heart that was cold, reserved, or empty of affection? One of the principal marks which St. Paul gives, as descriptive of the bad men, who will dishonour the last days of the declared enemies of God, who will follow the Beast, and who will do his work, is, that they will be "without affection" (2 Tim. iii. 3); it is the same thing as to say, "without heart." May God preserve you from ever having upon you this fatal mark! It was our duty to speak to you as we have just done, and you will do well to bear in mind every word of what I have said. However, when we are treating this grave subject, and in order that we may remain entirely within the truth, it is of importance never to forget the condemnation pronounced by the Holy See on the proposition of Molinos: "That no creature ought to have place in our heart . . . because God wishes to occupy it, and to possess it all alone."*

Mortify your mind, keeping it rigorously in that humility, and that sobriety of which we have spoken. Beware of your own opinion, which is the source of private views, of obstinacy, of foolish systems, of every intellectual extravagance, and of all singularity in conduct. This private judgment is the grand and mortal enemy of the faith, and the great ally, in your soul, of the Spirit of Darkness. Consequently treat it as such; and be sure that in going to war with it, you are fighting the battles of the Lord (1 Kings xxv. 28).

This seems the place, to exhort you in a particular

* *Nulla creatura, nec Beata Virgo, nec Sancti, sedere debent in corde nostro; quia solus Deus vult illud occupare et possidere.*—The 36th among the 68 propositions of Molinos, condemned by Innocent XI. in his Constitution: *Cœlestis Pater*, 1687. Ap. Denziger Enchirid.

manner, to mortify the natural organ of your mind, the organ which is often so prompt and so compliant in interpreting in speech its foolish jokes, its irregularities, and its vices. You guess that I refer to the tongue, "a man full of tongue, saith the Scripture, shall not be established on the earth" (Ps. cxxxix. 12). Not only it will make him wander from the way that leadeth to salvation, but even in the order of the temporal life, he will make many false steps, will cause much harm, and while he injures many people, he will do harm to no one so much as to himself. It is in truth what the Scripture says in another place "in the multitude of words there shall not want sin" (Prov. x. 19). The mouth of a talkative person is like a quiver filled with arrows, but arrows without number, and most of them are poisoned. There are some to wound every virtue, every creature, and even the Creator. You will recall what St. James has written of the tongue: "The tongue," he says, "is a fire, a world of iniquity, set on fire by hell, and the tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison" (St. James iii. 6—8). By right and by the Divine institution, the tongue is the witness of God, the apostle of truth, the abridged word of the Word; but in fact, it can be, it too often is, the angel of Satan, and his most able workman. What reasons for mortifying it! Grace is a perfume; it is by an unmortified tongue that it evaporates. The interior life is a treasure—it is an unbridled tongue that most commonly squanders it away. The infallible means of making God silent within us, is our not being able to keep silence ourselves. The great weapon, then, the weapon which has been tried and consecrated, is silence. Comprehend the necessity, comprehend the value of silence; submit

willingly to the law of silence prescribed by your rule ; know how to impose silence on yourselves, especially in those moments of effervescence when the fever of speaking seizes you ; love, relish, practise silence assiduously, and let your very words, by the humble, mild, reserved way in which you utter them, make all know that habitually, and by choice, you love and practise silence.

Finally, and above all, mortify your will. It is the decisive point. The whole of man, I have told you, is naturally the city of the old man ; but your will is his dwelling and his fortress. Let him be dislodged from everywhere else, if he holds possession of this stronghold, there is little really done, and he remains the master ; if, on the contrary, he is driven from there, he may wield and flourish the wreck of a sceptre, but that sceptre is broken. He can still wander up and down in that region, which was once his kingdom, but he roams in it, as a king dethroned, and who may be easily expelled. Without your will, neither the devil who is so bold, nor the world which is so able, nor concupiscence which is so mighty, can do anything against you. To trouble you, to torment you, to tempt you, is doubtless in their power, but to make you commit a fault, even the most venial of faults, this is what, of themselves, and without your free consent, they can never do. Except God, who cannot Himself either violate or force it, nothing is stronger than your will. Ah ! I beseech you, deliver up to Him this royal creature ! Let Him possess and reign therein, so that, drawing incessantly from the source of her royalty, by an humble dependence, and a filial devotedness towards God, it may reign thus, peaceably and holily over your whole being. Take from it, all that it has of its own, all that tends to make it act alone,

out of God, without God, and especially, in spite of God. "Woe to him that is alone," saith the Scripture (Eccles. iv. 20), which passage is meant especially for him who is alone, that is, without God. Hinder this will from exercising its cruel power, which it will inevitably do, when once it becomes independent : for, by nature, and by its state, it holds our moral being in its hands ; and when it ceases to administer this power, in the name and to the glory of God, it violates the most sacred of rights, hides the talent which has been entrusted to it, or squanders it miserably away. In short, like that hireling shepherd, of which the Gospel speaks, it kills, and destroys all that it steals. I assure you, that if all sense of personal right—I mean, all love for, or at least, all practice of independence towards God—were banished from your will, your old man would be overcome, your flesh would become subject, Satan would be disarmed, and for you, hell would be eternally closed ;* for you would have dried up in you the source of pride, and in truth, the source of sin. You would be no longer inordinately attached to yourselves, either as to the general direction of your lives, or to your own particular works. You would no longer be either your own centre, or your own end ; you would be truly free, delivered by the truth, and fully the children of God (St. John viii. 32)—in a word, the work of your sanctification will have been effected, the holy life of Jesus would abound in you even to overflowing ; and Jesus, completely Master of you, would unite you to the Father, Who is your end, because He is absolute perfection, and absolute felicity. Much is said of union with God : to attain this,

* We know the saying of St. Bernard, "If there was no self-will there would be no hell." *In quem enim ignis ille desæviet, nisi in propriam voluntatem.*—Serm. iii. in Temp. Resurrect.

is the highly laudable ambition of all those whom grace has touched, and who have tasted of the Heavenly gift. This union is the object of all spiritual treatises, of all evangelical preaching, of all the labour of the Holy Church, and of all its sufferings. Jesus only came, He only lives among us here below, and He only died, to procure us this eternal union. Now, do you know the instruction given us by St. John of the Cross, one of those who, without dispute, have most studied, best understood, and best described, both the way that leads to this union, and the conditions of obtaining it. "Union with God," he says, "is nothing else than the conformity of our will with the Divine will; but a conformity, so entire and perfect, that our will is never separated from the Divine will;" to which he adds, in order to show us that all our perfection is reduced to the mortification of our will: "A state so perfect demands of us an entire renouncement of our own will, of all private desires, even the most insignificant that we can suppose."*

To these considerations, though already so numerous, I wish, and I ought, to add three others, which are more general, and without which this instruction on Christian mortification would still be incomplete. The first is, take care that this work of your mortification continues through your whole life. It is what St. Augustine reminds us when he says: "What we have to do in this present life is to mortify by the spirit the works of the flesh; it is to afflict, to weaken, to bridle, to destroy those works, and to do this all the days of our life."† The old man

* Ascent of Mount Carmel, book i., ch. xi.

† Hoc est opus nostrum in hac vitâ actiones carnis spiritu mortificare, quotidie affligere, minuere, frenare, interimere.—Serm. clvi., de Verbis Apost. Rom. viii.

only dies when we die. It is a monster which has seven heads and many members. We may enchain, paralyse, or even cut off several of its members without destroying its life, or depriving it of its power to act, to combat, and to injure, which is all one to him. More than this, the members which have been cut off, spring up afresh like branches, which sprout again, from a root which has not been pulled up. There is no life more tenacious than that of this accursed one. Our Saviour refused to pray for the world (St. John xxvii. 9) ; for the world, as such, that is to say, such as the spirit by whom it is possessed makes it, and who, impressing on it his own image and his own character, renders it incapable of conversion. It is the same with the old man ; we may kill it, but not change it. It is wholly fixed and “seated in wickedness” (1 John v. 19) ; wickedness is its essence, and it therefore resembles the damned, who, being eternally obstinate in their wicked will, are incapable of repentance. So long as we are pilgrims in this life, and even after that, in concert with God, we have pronounced against the old man the sentence of death, which he deserves. This sentence does not yet have its final effect, and, so far as we are concerned, it may be repealed. The old man knows it ; and it is his nature, his law, his life, and hence a necessity for him to try to evade it, to appeal from ourselves to ourselves, and to reconquer all that we have taken from him. Driven back, at one point, he tries to attack us in another ; and even where we have obliged him to retire, he disputes the ground, step by step. Certainly, I do not deny that there comes a time and a state, when the soul that is mortified tastes a peace and a liberty, which are the earthly salary of her virtue, and the first profit of her victories. “How many things are

there," saith St. Augustine, "which formerly charmed us, and which charm us no longer. When they charmed us without giving our consent, however, it was something to mortify in us; at present that they charm us no longer, it is something that is dead."* It is clear that these deaths, by being multiplied, set free our true life, and therefore increase our inward tranquility. What is done, is no longer to be done; and when, in a certain measure, God has become to us all things, the world being no longer anything to us, the work of mortification cannot be any longer considerable. We should be deceived, however, if we thought that even then this work is wholly over. There is in truth always something to combat; and if happily there is nothing in us to contend against, there is still something to watch over, something in ourselves to mistrust, something for us to avoid. Then, as to the time during which you should exercise this virtue, do not be deceived; arm yourselves with courage, with longanimity, with patience. Rest yourselves sometimes; I would wish you to do so, and lay aside your arms; but beware of doing away with them, and do not, as St. Paul exhorts, "Get weary, and faint in your minds" (Heb. xii. 3). As a single leak is enough to let water into a ship, and, if not stopped, will cause it at length to sink: as a single coal barely extinguished is sufficient to kindle a fire that will burn down the whole house, so it may happen that your discontinuing to mortify yourself on one point may be enough to open a passage for the

* *Quam multa proficientes non jam delectant, quæ antea delectabant! Quando ergò delectabat et ei non consentiebatur, mortificabatur; quia jam non delectat, mortificatum est. Calca mortuum, transi ad vivum; calca jacentem, conflige cum resistente. Mortua est enim delectatio una, sed vivit altera.*—Serm. clvi. de Verb. Apost.

flesh to enter again, and succeed in covering with darkness all that was but lately filled with light. "He who despises small things, says the wise man, shall fall by little and little" (Eccles. xix. 10). And if any one sleeps when it is his duty to watch, he will be sooner or later surprised by the enemy. Here, then, more than elsewhere, perseverance is required. Father Faber, in his book of "Growth in Holiness" has a whole chapter entitled "Mortification our True Perseverance." It is very true that these two virtues are called by the same name, and mutually aid each other. Constancy is often of itself a very great mortification, but then it makes perfect all the rest, and it must needs complete the work. If these two virtues conduct our spiritual chariot, it will resemble that which, drawn by two heifers, carried back to Israel the ark, which had been taken by the Philistines. There is no danger that the chariot should be upset, should turn either to the right hand or to the left, nor even should stop on the road; "it will take the straight way to its destination" (1 Kings vi. 12).

However, and it is the second observation I wish to make, if constant self-mortification is always necessary, nevertheless, there are times and circumstances in which this duty is more urgent, because the soul is then tempted with greater violence and runs greater dangers. I need not remind you that certain demons cannot be cast out but by penance; if, then, these demons torment you, use the remedy which Jesus points out. A soul troubled, whether by certain fears or by certain fascinations, will sometimes only find peace by means of energetic acts of corporal mortification. But as this is almost a matter of course, I will not dwell upon it, and I limit myself to point out to you, apart from these critical

phases, a state sometimes more durable, and during which mortification becomes so much the more necessary, as there seems to be no call for it, and we easily think we have no further occasion to practise it. It is the state of prosperity, whether exterior or interior—the state when the soul seems haunted by that terrible demon, that David calls in the Psalms the noon-day devil (Ps. xc. 6). We do not speak here of those whom we call the happy ones of the earth, of the rich who live in luxury, and freely relish all the joys of the animal life. Certainly, there are none among mankind to whom the mortifying virtue of the Cross is more necessary. Without the Cross there is no salvation to hope for in their case. But commonly, alas! there are none who have less care about this salutary Cross. Happy are they when they only forget it, since there are so many who blaspheme it! But even for you, who, by the goodness of Our Lord, are disengaged from these ties, who do not value these phantoms, and whose hearts are dead to these false joys, certain sorts of prosperity are possible for you, and the natural life has not wholly lost its enchantments.

Thus it happens that you feel in yourself a fulness of physical life, an abundance of strength, a vigour of health, an intellectual energy, a readiness of memory, a vivacity of imagination, a facility of speech, an animation of spirit, an exuberance of sympathy, a need of expansion—in a word, a tranquil and assured possession of your whole being, with a joy in feeling all this,—these states of feeling, I say, and of mind, incline the soul almost fatally, to make itself its principal support, and, consequently, to take its principal repose in the life which we pass here on earth. We are then all but forgetting our

condition as sinners. We have no longer the feeling that this world is a sad, wearying, painful abode, suitable for penance—in a word, a place of exile. We find ourselves here so much at our ease, and so well provided with all we want, that we ask what is there that we want, and we say instinctively, that if things remained thus, we should have, in short, a very acceptable paradise. This state becomes still worse when it becomes more sweet—when this interior rebound of the natural life corresponds exteriorly to one of those delicious seasons when all Nature is full of light, and beams forth and smiles in the cheering rays of the sun—the season when the woods are green, the meadows enamelled, when the gardens are bedecked and bright with flowers, and the air is scented with sweet odours, borne along by the passing breeze; the season of the hum of insects and the singing of birds, when everywhere there is life, with all its charms. What helps sometimes to deceive the soul in these emotions, and to hide from it its own peril, is, that if otherwise it is Christian, especially if it is or has been ever so little spiritual, it derives even from this very state an increase of tender sentiments, which it may easily take to be sentiments of piety. Thus it is full of confidence; it speaks with happiness and eloquence, of the ineffable goodness of God, and of the sweets of His service. Now, how often, without perceiving it, it speaks thus under the impression of a satisfied egotism, rather than under the inspiration of a veritable charity. How often it is, in reality, much more attached to the gifts of God than to God Himself; and certainly among these gifts, those are the least elevated which touch it most! We have only to see how those who are subject for a time to the enchantment of this state, without taking,

while in it, the requisite precautions, afterwards receive the higher gifts of the Divine goodness, which are humiliations and sufferings. Among the numerous benefits which come to us from a delicate temperament, and especially from an habitual state of sickness, we must place that, of escaping, for the most part, from such intoxications of the life of Nature ; for a feeble state of health has this peculiar property, that it deprives us of almost all the relish and the charm of exterior things. In reality, even for those who have not this resource, little valued by the greater number, those phases of mind of which we are speaking, commonly soon pass away, and we must bless God for it. Further, nothing is perfect on earth, and we may count during the year in the sky more days without clouds, than we can count in our life days passed without sorrow. If there are insects that injure our corn, there are also thorns round our roses. In spite of all, if you happen to find yourself attacked with this fascination of earthly prosperity, call to mind that now is the time for you to watch over yourself, to distrust yourself, to control your dispositions, to repress your excitement, to restrain your ardour, to bring your senses under the yoke of the spirit, to make the yoke even more heavy, to combat dissipation, to recollect yourself, to apply your mind to spiritual realities, your heart to the blessings divinely promised you—in a word, to remember and to imitate the mortified life of Jesus on earth, the terms in which He merited the glory of His life in Heaven.

Yet beware of falling into the extreme of never wishing to put your foot in those marvellous ladders which God has placed in our way, to aid us to ascend even to Himself—I mean, the sensible creation. It is the third remark which I have to make to you. Take care that

you never keep this great book of Nature on which the all-holy Name of God is so admirably written, always and absolutely closed (Ps. viii. 1). This would be to deprive God of the homage which is dear to Him, and to deprive yourselves of a multitude of precious means of knowing and loving Him, Whom we can never know and love enough. I am not speaking of the annoyance which those excessive mortifications cause to others, nor of the scandal which they occasion ; for this is the almost inevitable effect of a counterfeit virtue, which, being indiscreet, is also false and pharisaical. Heresy urges men to the practice of these counterfeit virtues ; Jansenism especially has a good number of them on its list. The true faith which never produces this mere semblance of virtue, gives us the grace to avoid it, and the sense to recognise it when it appears.

Would it indeed have profited the world if, in order the better to mortify his senses, Augustine had prohibited himself from looking on the sea and the heavens through the window of his house at Ostia ? Would it have been any gain to him if he had deprived his soul of this opportunity of elevating it from the spectacle of those azure waters, and that still more azure sky, to the visions of the interior world, and from thence to the contemplation of that land of “inexhaustible wealth,” as he calls it, “where God eternally satiates His children with the bread of truth, and opens to them the living sources of His wisdom, to slake their thirst ?”^{*} What advantage would it have

^{*} Et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua, et venimus in mentes nostras, et transcendimus eas ut adtingeremus ad regionem ubertatis indeficientis, ubi pascis Israel in æternum veritatis pabulo, et ubi vita Sapientia est per quam fiunt ista omnia et quæ fuerunt et quæ futura sunt, et ipsa non fit, sed sic est ut fuit et sic erit semper.—Confess., lib. ix., cap. 10.

been to St. Francis of Assisium if, instead of contemplating the sun, and of listening to the singing of the birds, and holding with them those holy and ravishing conversations, of which we read in his book of "The Little Flowers," he had placed his virtue in becoming obstinately blind and deaf! Apart from a special attraction, which has been tried and approved, placing the soul officially in a certain state, and, which, if it is from God, rarely lasts through life, it would be entirely to misapprehend the spirit of the Gospel to go to these extremes, and especially to fix oneself therein. Remember that, if the Scripture tells us to do penance (St. Matt. iv. 17), to mortify the flesh with its concupiscences (Gal. v. 25), "not to love the world, nor the things which are in the world," because "all that is in the world is pride, curiosity, or impurity" (1 St. John ii. 16), it tells us also to "consider the lilies of the field" (St. Matt. vi. 28), "to behold the birds of the air." It tells us "that by the greatness of the beauty of creatures the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby" (Wisd. xiii. 5). It tells us "that every creature of God is good, and we may make use of it, on condition of using it holily, and of giving thanks to God for permitting its use" (1 Tim. iv. 4). It says lastly, by the inspired lips of David, "Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings; and in the works of Thy Hands I shall rejoice. O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep. The senseless man shall not know, nor will the fool understand these things" (Ps. xci. 5).

To conclude this first part, shall I speak to you of a royal practice of mortification, a practice which is of universal application, which is possible for everybody, which is good under all circumstances? Making holy all

our works, this practice to which I allude has a marvellous alliance with humility (which certain excessive mortifications run the risk of compromising), and has also a close and intimate relation with that simplicity and liberty which ought to be the dominant characteristic of the true children of God. This practice is as follows: Never seek after joy for its own sake.

It is not to seek joy for its own sake, to desire it, to anticipate it, and to take it from the Hands of God, Who, so willingly, gives it to you; to take it, I say, when feeling yourself exhausted or harassed in mind, you reasonably judge that a little innocent joy may relieve and refresh you. This joy is, then, like a repast, which serves to repair the strength, and, assisting labour, profits both God and man. Repose is not idleness; to halt in our way, is not to give up the journey; and if we make this halt at a proper time, far from delaying us, it helps us on our road. But do not seek joy, only because it is joy, only and principally to enjoy yourself; and if you desire to be perfect, you may understand this of spiritual as well as of sensible joy. All joy taken thus, captivates the soul, and what captivates sullies it. If, without having sought or wished it, you feel a certain joy which cannot be avoided, and is not therefore bad, do not stop to dwell upon it, after a manner which is human and egotistical; pass beyond it, and so much the more quickly, as this joy is the more fresh; ascend, and so much the higher, as this joy is of a nature to draw you down. Pass on to thanksgiving; mount up with the thought, with the desire, with the hope of the better blessings of which that which now delights you is only the shadow and the pledge. By an interior act at once mild and energetic, first withdraw

your will and then your attention, then your whole soul, as much as you can, from the sensation which affects it and which rejoices its inferior part. Let your soul, then, emigrate to *its* own high places, there to contemplate from on high, at a distance, and, therefore, chastely and with impunity, what passes below in itself. A body without a soul is a body without life. Thus voluntarily withdrawing your soul from your senses, you will present to the objects, which naturally cause them joy, only a surface which is inanimate and dead. This is what St. Paul calls : "Using this world as if we used it not" (1 Cor. vii. 31). To use it, is the business of simplicity and liberty ; to use it, as using it not, is the business of mortification. Oh, how far this duty goes ! but, also, how far it leads us on ! By entering thus deeply into the mystery of the Passion and Death of Christ, how magnificently do those who walk in this way share in the mystery of His Life ! For it is to this that we must always return, because in fact all reduces itself to it. The question is, to love God, and His Holy Son Jesus, Who is one with His Father ; but to love Them above all things, and with a love always increasing. Now, "This is life," said our Lord, "and life eternal." The question, then, is, in brief, for us all to live, but with a life free, full, immense, and Divine ; and for all of us here on earth there is no other question. We only die, we have only to die, to that which makes us die, by hindering us to live ; and if, on the one hand, we live only when we are dead ; on the other, we are wholly dead only when we are wholly alive. It is being full that makes us empty. It is by being enamoured with the Divine that we detach ourselves from the human. If all the blood flows into one member, is it not a necessity that all the other members should be

paralysed? If one strong passion occupies and fills the heart, is it not true that this heart becomes indifferent to all the rest, and whether we consider the feeling of the heart about it, on any anxiety it has in reference to it, may we not say, that in its regard, the world is dead? And in the same way, if God lives in your heart as He has a right to live in it, as He desires to live in it, and as it would be your happiness that He should live in it, all that is not God, or belongs not to God, or concerns not God, will seem so insignificant to you, that you will almost infallibly feel disdain or disgust for it. "When I was a child," saith St. Paul, "I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away the things of a child" (1 Cor. xiii. 11.) This is what happens to those lovers of God, to those whose life is in Him. They say, and they sing with the Saints: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14). "The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ" (Philipp. iii. 7). "Who then shall separate me from the love of my God Who is in Jesus Christ? Nothing shall separate me from Him, I am sure of it (Rom. viii. 35); for, except Thyself, my Divine Master, what have I in Heaven; and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii. 25). My life is where my heart is, my heart is where my treasure is (St. Matt. vi. 11), and I have no treasure but Jesus.

II.

Our great object in the sanctification of souls, by means of instruction, should be, not to point out what ought to be done, though this is evidently necessary at first, but to decide the will to do it, and thus to obtain

that firmness and authority of effort which comes from the relish and love of duty. For then, the heart being united to the will, and blended with it, all that is most interior and most powerful in man, is gained over and conquered for his good ; and this it is which while it gives perfection to the virtues, ensures, as far as is possible, their final and eternal success. Of these who are thus gained, the Holy Spirit says, that they have the law in the midst of their heart (Ps. xxxix. 9). The law has, in fact, become their central light, and their focus ; it is the soul of their soul, and the principle of their actions ; and in this consists the prelude, or rather the substance of the state of the Blessed, who can never more love, desire, nor do anything, but what is good and holy. This attachment of heart to duty becomes still more important, if there is question of a difficult virtue, to which human nature feels an essential repugnance, and which cannot therefore be practised, but at the cost of struggles and victories. It is clear that among these laborious virtues, mortification occupies a principal place. This is why, having first explored with you the field of its labour, we must now draw from the treasures of the Gospel, all that may help you to appreciate and to love it. We had this object in view when we promised to discover to you its sources ; whereby, you remember, we proposed to indicate certain supernatural points of view, certain Catholic truths, which place in its full light, this law of Christian mortification, which make you see its wisdom, its depth, its utility, its admirable beauty ; certain virtues also, which, springing from these truths as heat from light, sustain the soul which mortifies itself, transforming duty into a necessity, and cause it, even in labour, in combat, and in suffering, to find calm, support, and real joy.

The first motive which urges us to the practice of mortification, is the dogma and the virtue of justice. I call justice a dogma, inasmuch as it is a truth, revealed to us, and is a matter of faith, rather than of reason. I call it a virtue, because, it cannot be known without being approved and loved for its own sake, and when this approbation and love acquire the solidity, the vigour, and the influence over us which they ought to have, they then become a praiseworthy habit, a good and holy principle of action—in a word, that which we call a virtue.

This word justice, is sacred in all the languages of mankind, for it expresses what is of all things in the world, the most divine, the most vital, the most indispensable, and, first of all, it expresses one of the essential attributes of God. We can as little conceive God to be without justice, as without power, without wisdom, without liberty, and without goodness. And what is this justice, but the absolute incompatibility, which the absolute goodness of His Being, establishes between Himself and what is evil; and consequently, the inevitable, irresistible action of this sovereign and unchangeable goodness on the wicked. The Scripture translates this action into words, in that strange and energetic phrase: “with the perverse thou wilt be perverted” (Ps. xvii. 27)—that is to say, to those who oppose you, you will show yourself opposed, hostile, and contradictory.

God in Himself is a pure ocean of life, of light, of beauty, of love, and of happiness, and in that happiness lies His goodness. When, in its manifestation in our regard, this goodness becomes benevolence, it does not change either its nature, or its character, or its condition; but then, without ceasing to be that ocean, it becomes to us an impetuous torrent which overflows us, a torrent of

life, of brightness, of love, and of beatitude. The prodigious rapidity of the sun's irradiation does but imperfectly represent the impetuous burst of infinite love towards us. If, when this effusion reaches Him, the creature lays itself open to receive it as God wishes, and, as it is our obligation and our interest to wish it, if it believes, if it hopes, if it loves, if it surrenders itself—in a word, if it is good towards God with that humble and docile goodness, which God asks for, when He creates it in the soul, provided that this soul puts no obstacle to it, God then pours forth His torrents, that is to say, His gifts and His operations, and, at last, pours Himself into the soul in full liberty. He penetrates that soul, He vivifies it, He enlightens it, He fills it, He sanctifies it, He deifies it, in the degree He has fixed in predestinating it; for the divine goodness is in the saints a sea, which itself forms the shore. But if it happens, which our liberty renders possible here below, if it happens that this torrent of graces finds the soul insubmissive, and closed, obstinate in contradicting, in resisting, in contending, it is easy to comprehend that this infinite power which impels God towards us, becomes, by the fact of the rebellion of His creature, a frightful force of propulsion and of expulsion, which, having disturbed it without overcoming it, chases the creature before it, and ends by precipitating it far from God into that frightful abyss where love never enters. So that if the soul is lost, it is the goodness of God towards it, the love of God for it, which is the first cause of its eternal ruin: the innocent, the involuntary, the indirect, yet, withal, the real cause. Now, we see in this, the justice of God: a sun, which, because we do not place ourselves in proper relation to it, becomes a cause of blindness for those whom it ought

to make glad with its light—a fire whence come rays of life, fecundity, and happiness, and which, because we will not put ourselves in a proper relation with it, produces sterility, conflagration, devastation, despair, and death. “God, Who is only good by His nature,” says Tertullian, “becomes just by our own conduct.” Such is the truth, and such is the order of things.* Even the wicked who suffer from it, because they have voluntarily fixed themselves in the state in which they suffer, cannot succeed, in spite of their hate, in proving this order unjust; and the damned in hell, in their rage and gnashing of teeth, do not say that God is unjust; or, if they say so, they belie their own conscience. For, however energetic the act may be which chastises them, that act remains full of wisdom, of discretion, and moderation. It is written, that “God judges with tranquility” (Wisd. xii. 18); that “His judgments are a weight and a balance” (Prov. xvi. 11)—that is to say, exactitude itself. The Scripture further affirms: that even in His furious wrath He does not know how to “shut up His mercies” (Ps. lxxvi. 10), and it is the certain teaching of theology that there is no sinner, either on the earth or in hell, not one, who is not punished less severely than he deserves.† However, this doctrine is not opposed to the truth which the Scripture also states, “that the judgments of God are a great deep”

* *Accipe Deum de suo optimum, de nostro, justum. Nisi enim homo deliquisset, optimum solummodò Deum nosset ex proprietate naturæ: at nunc etiam justum eum patitur ex causæ necessitate.*—Tertull., *De Resurr. Carnis*, cap. xiv.

† *In damnatione reproborum apparet misericordia, non quidem totaliter relaxans, sed aliquantulum allevians, dum punit citra condignum.*—S. Thom. *Summ. I. p. Quæst. xxxi. art. 4.*—V. et *Supplem. Quæst. xcix, art. 2, ad I.*

(Ps. xxxv. 7); that we can no more appeal against them, than escape them; and that, as St. Paul tells us: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31).

Oh! how our Lord Jesus Christ loved this justice! He died for this love, because it was His life. Nothing can impress the mind that reflects, so much as the spectacle of the Word, judging with a calm serenity His own Humanity, and applying to it, as the Supreme and Infallible Judge, all the penalties due to the sins of all mankind, and of each of us individually, and which He voluntarily took upon Himself. But a spectacle not less touching, and I venture to say, not less divine, is that of this pure, and gentle, and humble Humanity, calling down upon Itself these judgments of the Word, and delivering Itself up to them all with a calm, a docility, a piety, a love, a fulness, and a joy, unspeakable; and still more, when through an excess of delicacy and of kindness for us, and to show us to what a degree He was one of ourselves, Jesus willed, like us, to be afraid, to be weary, to be distressed, to fall into an agony, and to ask mercy of His Father. No, Jesus has not loved anything so much here below, as this justice of God. This love is the soul of His life, the foundation of all His mysteries, and, indeed, their very substance. The first word that Jesus says to God, is, that He comes to satisfy it (Ps. xxxix. 9). The first word He says to man is, that they are to become just by becoming penitent (St. Matt. iv. 17); and the last word He says at once to God and to His Brethren is, that by His Death to which He delivered Himself, "all is consummated" (St. John xix. 30)—that is to say, that justice is satisfied. "Blessed," said Jesus to His Disciples, "are they who hunger and

thirst after justice " (St. Matt. v. 6). He says that of no other virtue. The other virtues we should love and we should practise ; but for this virtue the proper measure is a kind of excess, and the love of it only attains its due level when it becomes a real passion. Justice is that fire which Jesus came on earth to kindle, and which He wished to see enkindled everywhere in His Church (St. Luke xii. 49).

It is easy to understand how this sentiment and this love of justice should become in us a most powerful motive of mortification ; and as this holy virtue could hardly have a higher reason for its existence, so, perhaps, it cannot have a more solid foundation, or a more prolific source of action. We have spoken, as Jesus did, of the hunger and thirst after justice : as far as regards ourselves, mortification is the bread which satisfies the one, and the water which quenches the other. The most holy justice of God has pronounced against man an irrevocable sentence : " Dying thou shalt die " (Gen. ii. 17). Among the countless posterity of Adam, none have been able to escape this sentence ; but on no one of those on whom it has fallen, has it fallen so heavily, or been executed so vigorously, as on Jesus. If we believe this decree, and how can we fail to believe it ? if we enter into this justice, and as Christians, how can we fail to enter into it ? shall we have first of all much difficulty in accepting life, such as it is ? Shall we not rather be led to think it often as too sweet ? for it is true that it is often sweet. God leaves in it many joys, and it is Himself who gives us them. Yes, were it not for His holy grace, we might be tempted to find this sweetness too much for our weakness, since there are so many, to whom, alas ! this goodness of God becomes a snare. But it is not only the weariness

and the troubles of this present life, which our reverence and love for the decree pronounced against Adam, enable us to bear with patience : we shall accept even death itself, and if we meet it with humility and love, this loving resignation may, without doubt, be counted as the height of mortification. We shall not only accept it when God shall sound the hour for our departure, we shall accept it in advance, we shall think of it willingly, frequently, peaceably, and with joy. We shall prepare ourselves for it, we shall in spirit surrender ourselves to it with all our heart ; loving death, because it avenges God, because it is the entire destruction of His enemy within us ; loving it, because it contributes to order—in a word, because it accomplishes and consummates in us His justice. How can we help thinking that one of the first and most intense joys of the soul after a holy death, will be to see its body become the prey of the Divine justice, and giving this glory to its Judge, of undergoing literally and completely, His sentence : “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” I have heard a saying of a holy soul greatly enlightened by God,* that the instant when the body, about to be interred, receives on the coffin the first handful of earth, is, in the order of justice, a most important moment : so much so, that for pure souls, and whose debts to God’s justice are but small, this moment, when they pay in their remains the last account with God, is often the instant when they are freed from purgatory and enter into paradise.†

* The Mother Mary of Jesus Du Bourg, foundress of the Sisters of the Saviour.

† The day after the death of Father Colombière, the blessed Margaret Mary unto Mother Greyfié : “There is no more need of prayers. He is in a state to pray to God for us, being, through the goodness and mercy of the sacred Heart of our Lord and Saviour

Yet we will go further than this passive mortification. Pressed by this justice, which, so long as we are in this world, is only the jealousy of holy love, the soul will vindicate against itself the interests of God's glory. It will undertake to perform His exalted works, and feeling but too keenly within itself the remains and the germ of that sin which God punishes, it will avenge upon itself the outraged honour of its Master. The Christian mounts thus, even to the tribunal of Jesus ; he sits by the side of his Judge, he has a share of His Spirit, participates in His function, co-operates in His work, and accusing himself of all, of which his Judge accuses him, condemning all that He condemns, he pronounces invariably the same sentence as his Judge. Does not St. Paul tell us that "he who is spiritual judges all things" (1 Cor. ii. 15). Now, he treats himself, according to the judgment pronounced upon him ; and as he has been the Mouth of God in declaring himself culpable, he becomes the Hand of God in giving himself chastisements. Happy substitution ! whence it follows that in satisfying, he merits ; that in paying a debt here on earth, he amasses for himself on high great treasures ! "For the time is," saith St. Peter, "that judgment should begin at the House of God" (1 St. Peter iv. 17). Now, this house, is ourselves (Heb. iii. 6). It is certain, "if we judge ourselves," writes St. Paul, "God will not have to judge us hereafter" (1 Cor. xi. 31), but rather to give us a reward. It was the confidence of David, who said : "I have done judgment and

Jesus Christ, placed in Heaven ; only in order to satisfy for some negligences into which he had fallen in the exercise of the Divine Love, his soul was deprived of seeing God, from the time it went out of his body, to the moment when he was placed in the grave."—*Life and Works of the Blessed Margaret Mary*, vol. i., p. 156.

justice (I have judged and punished myself) : give me not up to them that slander me " (Ps. cxviii. 121).

Another chief source of mortification, is the hatred of oneself. This second source is a near neighbour of the first ; and in their course, the two often mingle their waters. Whether mortification come from one or the other, it takes especially the character of a satisfaction rendered to God, and hence it becomes one with the virtue of penance. To mortify, is to cause death. Now, hatred is essentially a homicide. If it is said of Satan : " That he was a murderer from the beginning " (St. John viii. 44), it is because from the beginning he was a hater. To kill, we must hate ; the supreme need, the last work of hatred, and consequently that which pacifies it, is to kill. You know that the Gospel often speaks of the hatred of oneself : it makes it a duty, and an absolute necessity. " Amen, amen, I say unto you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal " (St. John xii. 25). The contempt of oneself, which is also commanded, may suffice for humility ; but if we are to mortify, we must hate ourselves.

Is it so difficult to hate ourselves ? Yes, if we have not faith. Again : Yes, if there is little faith, there will be little hatred of self ; if, like so many Christians in the world, we live in inattention, without reflection, in dissipation. But for a true Christian, and especially for a true Religious, this hatred springs up without effort : it is the most simple consequence of our history considered in the bright light of faith. For whosoever has seriously meditated what sin is, and, therefore, what the old man

is—the fruitful father of sin in us—this hatred of self becomes inevitable. And do you know what is its true measure? That of the love which we owe to God. It is the reverse side and counterpart of this love.

I have told you, but I must repeat it : sin, the sinner, the old man, is the enemy of God. It destroys the works of God : its instinct, its express will, its obstinate passion, its incessant labour, and, in the measure in which it succeeds, its too real work, is to destroy them. And who can say what evil and what misfortune is contained in the destruction of a thing which God has made? If a man, for any object whatever, destroys certain works of another man, for example, the master-work of an artist, he stirs up the indignation of multitudes. If anyone sets fire to, and burns down a town, the indignation becomes furious. Erostratus is a name which is execrated. With what hatred do you think all the human race would pursue him, who, to suppose an impossible case, would blot out the sun? Such evils are very great, and very great are the crimes which bring them about. What crime must it not be, then, to injure, to ruin, to efface the holy likeness of God, His living and beloved Image, the work of His Hand, and restored with His Blood? It is a dogmatic truth of which there is no doubt, that, as the least blessing in the order of grace is superior to all the blessings of nature,* so the least loss or detriment in the supernatural order, is an evil, which, considered in itself, is greater than all possible temporal evils. And the loss of a soul for all eternity, what an evil must it be! Now, what destroys these souls, which are unspeakably dear to God? Certainly, Satan and the

* Bonum gratiæ unius majus est quàm bonum naturæ totius universi.—St. Thomas 1a 2dæ Quæst. cxiii. art. 9. ad 2.

world contribute to this loss ; but, in truth, the great agent of damnation is concupiscence, that is to say, the flesh, or the old man.

Shall I venture to say that this execrable power of concupiscence does still worse than destroy souls ? Yes, in a certain sense ; for when it is wholly master, and carries on its work to its last end, it produces in creatures a monstrous sentiment, and one which would seem to be impossible, namely, the hatred of God. And are you not of my opinion, that to lose God is less frightful than to hate Him ? Now, concupiscence contains in its germ the formal hatred of God. What loves, O Jesus, are those, which at the end compel and force us to hate Love itself ! You do not believe it, heedless and indifferent souls, who, wishing to serve God, and who perhaps do serve Him in a measure, yet give the rein to your passions, great or little. You have not sufficiently understood the mystery of love, to comprehend wholly the mystery of hate. This hate is, however, the abyss where those inclinations lead, on the brink of which it is only a sport for you to venture. Do not be deceived, do not flatter yourselves, because at the present moment the very thought only of hating God fills you with horror. “He who commits sin,” saith Jesus, “is the servant of sin” (St. John viii. 34) ; and the servant, so long as he remains a servant, goes, whether he will or not, where his master leads him. It is a thing quite evident that the world hates God, and with an implacable hatred. Without this hatred, it would no longer be the world ; without those acts of which this hatred has made it the author during six thousand years, it would have no history. You have only to follow it in the history of the Church, and you may read it in characters of fire, in the History of Jesus. The Pas-

sion, regarded not on the part of Jesus Who suffers it, but on the part of those who inflicted this suffering on Him, on the part of the Pharisees, of the High Priests, of the Judges, of His executioners, and of the people, this Passion in all its facts and circumstances, is the complete revelation of the spirit of the world, because it is the greatest liberty that God has ever given it, to push forward its designs, and to succeed in its enterprise. Now, there is nothing there, but hate; in the Passion of Jesus hate inspires all, decides all, and does all, a hate, which is senseless, ferocious, and inexorable. Well, then, what saith St. John, teaching us in the Holy Ghost? "All that is in the world," he says, "and the world itself is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 St. John ii. 16), which we have said precisely constitutes the old man. What are the sentiments which every Christian ought to have towards such a being? is there not reason to apply to it without mercy the law of retaliation, and to hate it, as it hates, and because it hates what is sovereignly, adorable, and amiable? Is it not reasonable to pronounce against himself, the old man, that unjust judgment that he passed on Jesus: "He is worthy of death" (St. Matt. xxvi. 66), and to cry out as he cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him" (St. Luke xxiii. 21). And because this being, deserving all the maledictions of heaven and of earth, is in us, lives in us, and depends on us, is it not good, necessary, and urgent, to nail him ourselves to the cross, and to leave him there till he is dead? Every serious Christian will draw this conclusion. He will feel, he will nourish against sin, and against that portion of himself where he knows that it yet dwells, that "perfect hatred" of

which David speaks (Ps. cxxxviii. 22); and his hate becoming active, and being kindled into a greater and greater flame, under the fanning breath of the holy love of God, he will treat his old man as the holy King David treated his enemies, who were first of all the enemies of his Lord. "I will pursue after my enemies," he says, "and overtake them, and I will not return again till they are consumed. I will break them, and they shall not be able to stand, they shall fall under my feet" (Ps. xvii. 38).

A third motive of mortification is prudence. There is a prudence of the flesh which consists in zealously providing this flesh with everything that it demands, in placing our mind, our zeal, our time, and our resources at the service of its desires and of its pleasures. "This prudence," saith St. Paul, "leads to death" (Rom. viii. 6), or rather it is itself a death, in the sense that he in whom it rules cannot be any longer in the state of grace with God. It is "that wisdom of the world" which St. James calls "animal, earthly, and diabolical." It devotes the soul to the body; it makes of man man's God; it is the religion and the worship of oneself. But there is a prudence of the spirit which St. Paul directly opposes to that of the flesh, and of which he says it is the source "of life and peace" (Rom. viii. 6) to those who possess it, and are inspired with it. It is the praiseworthy habit of discerning and of doing what aids our true progress, the divine perfection, and happiness of our being—the triumph and reign of Jesus Christ in us. While egotism is the soul of the prudence that kills, charity to oneself is the soul of the prudence that saves. Satan is the principal of the first; the Holy Spirit the Father of the second.

Under the sway of this virtue Christian mortification

changes its aspect. It takes the character of a moral treatment, of a means of spiritual health, and a divine system of education. Then grace no longer appears as it did just before, under the character of a judge, which condemns and punishes ; it puts on the sweet aspect of a mother, who, having at her fireside a child often ill and always weakly, attends to it with solicitude, surrounds it with safeguards, and without weakness, and with order, but also with a tender and an all-compassionate kindness, gives it, when neeeful, the necessary remedies. Many will be more touched with this point of view than with any others. In reality, it equals in value all the rest, since it is true as they are ; and for those of whom we speak, it is better than any other views, since it is a question of success, and of what moves especially the will in its decisions. Who will straiten and confine the ways of God ? Who would wish to lessen the number of these steps of wisdom, which the Holy Ghost declares to be manifold ? (Eccles. i. 7.) The steps of wisdom in the soul, the steps of the soul in wisdom. Who will restrain that freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free ? (Gal. iv. 31.)

Mortification becomes, then, in this point of view, a means indicated and blessed by God, an infallible means, therefore, of delivering the soul from falsehood and from evil, of snatching it from the tyrannic hands of "that unjust and deceitful man," of whom the Royal Prophet complains (Ps. xlii. 1). It serves to purify our nature, to cure it ; it opens it to heavenly influences ; it ensures the order and subordination of its faculties, and thus procures its peace, its dignity, its honour, its salvation, its felicity. This excellent prudence has an ideal from which it never takes off its eyes, even when it lowers them to consider its own maladies. That ideal is the heavenly state, the

state of sanctity, stability, and perfect happiness. It knows well that this state will only have its consummation in heaven, yet it sees it in part realised on earth, and already realised in the risen life of Jesus, a life which is the direct fruit and the immediate consequence of His Passion and Death. Jesus having left the sepulchre, was still for some time on earth; He remained there forty days. He was visibly and palpably on the earth; He spoke, He walked; not subject to hunger, He yet took nourishment; in fine, He was among us, but after a manner entirely heavenly, not subject any longer to death or suffering, and enjoying, even in His Body, all those qualities which flowed from the glory of His Soul.

It is the hope of conducting by little and little to this sublime condition, the soul, whose cure for the love of God it has undertaken, which sustains this prudence and animates its toil. Its faith is its courage. It believes, it knows that in this mystery, as in all others, Christ is our model, and that as He condescends to offer Himself to us as our Exemplar, as He is "full of truth," so also He is "full of grace" (St. John i. 14)—that is to say, that while He gives us light to understand and to admire, He gives at the same time strength to imitate. But because the resurrection supposes and follows death, prudence takes care not to pretend to change this order, and it mortifies us the more readily, in that it desires with the more ardour to see us live the life of God. The fact is, that by dint of combating and of mortifying in us the earthly and outward man, it succeeds by God's help in placing the inward man in a kind of splendour, of impassibility, of agility, and of subtlety, which are the four principal characteristics of the glorified life; of splendour, because empty of itself and filled with Jesus, the

soul sheds its brightness all around it; impassibility, because by its elevation it truly rules over everything, and merits that it should be said of it what St. Dionysius wrote to St. John, the martyr for the faith, in the Isle of Patmos: "As to your pains, you feel them, but you do not suffer from them;"* agility also, by the liberty, the facility, the promptitude, and the fervour, which the holy indifference for the world, and the entire forgetfulness of self, gives to the soul in acting; and subtlety, because the life of one thus mortified truly becomes a life more angelic than human. Doubtless, this moral conformity to the risen life of Jesus admits of degrees, and no copy equals the original; but it approaches it. And such is the value of a single degree of a like resemblance, that the confidence of gaining only one degree is sufficient to inspire the design of mortifying ourselves completely, and to enable us to persevere in so doing.

Besides, holy prudence can see and seek after the happiness of the body as well as that of the soul; not only the eternal happiness promised to the risen body, but also its temporal and actual happiness. To mention the number of sicknesses from which mortification saves us, we must count up all those caused by irregular passions. There is no medical man, however inexperienced, who will not tell us that not only sobriety, but a discreet measure of austerity, is, according to the ordinary course of things, a condition most favourable to health. There is not one who does not also say that some energetic, manual labour, and a life without effeminacy, preserve and develop the strength, both of

* *Equidem haud ità demens sum ut arbitrer te quidquam pati; imò verò passiones corporis hâc ex parte tantùm sentire credo ut easdem sensu tenus percipies.*—Epist. x.

the mind and body. However, do not stop to consider this benefit to the health, although it is no small boon ; but think of the liberty which this health gives you for the complete and continual observance of your rule, which it renders both possible and easy, and of the services it enables you to render, and, lastly, the longevity which is its natural consequence ; for to everyone who lives a Christian life, and especially a life of sanctity, a long life is an immense blessing, extending before us a long career of merits, to which death puts an end. Who does not see that all these thoughts, all these hopes, are very legitimate and most powerful encouragements to the practice of mortification ? This is not at all contrary to what we said just now, of a certain contempt that every good nun ought to have about her health, and the generosity with which it becomes her to spend her strength ; it is another point of view which only completes the first, instead of destroying and excluding it ; and in explaining to you this latter consideration, as also when considering the former one, I am in harmony with the saints. In truth, as the old man enslaves and defiles the whole of our nature, so it is the whole of our nature which is delivered and saved by mortification. “It is not the flesh itself,” says St. Augustine (and by the flesh he means our body), “it is not the flesh which is our enemy ; and when we resist the vices which dishonour our body, we cure it, which is a proof that we love it.”* You cannot be ignorant of the law formulated by St. Paul : “No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it ;” to which he adds what wonderfully exalts this care and this love, “as also Christ

* Non ipsa caro est inimica nostra ; et quandò ejus vitiis resistitur, ipsa amatur, quia ipsa curatur.—Lib. de Continentiâ.

does the Church" (Ephes. v. 29)—that is to say, in fact, that what the Church is to Jesus, what the wife is to the husband, the body is precisely to the spirit—there is the same relation, the same subordination, the same union, the same community of life, of condition, and of destiny. The same God has created them, and He has created them to unite them. These views are particularly dear to the holy prudence of the mind, and while they inflame its zeal, they constitute its security. For how can this prudence go astray, since it takes its form and its law from Jesus? It is from His Sacred Heart that it derives that compassion with which it is constantly filled for its sick companion, the body, whom it tenders, and without sparing the invalid any of the operations which are necessary or of use to it, has the secret of making all sweet, and by sweetening all, making it accept all, support all, and love all. "Come, now, my poor heart," said St. Francis of Sales, speaking to himself in the spirit of that sweet and mercy-loving prudence, "see how we have fallen into the ditch that we have made so many resolutions to avoid. Oh! let us rise up again, let us call upon the mercy of God, and let us hope in that mercy, that it may help us to be henceforth more firm, and let us again put ourselves in the road of humility. Courage! let us be on our guard. God will aid us; we shall see it."* There is no reason, then, to distrust a similar pity, which is rather piety than pity, and which remains good without being lax. The thought of the motherhood of grace in regard to our infirm humanity; the thought of Jesus as our Doctor, knowing Himself what it is to suffer, and better than those whom He tends only to cure; the thought of that sweet and Good Spirit,

* Introduction to the Devout Life.—Part iii. ch. 10.

“Whose property it is,” saith the Scripture, “to make ‘the waters to run’” (Ps. cxlvii); and Who is sanctity, only because He is love. What are these waters but so many angels whom God furnishes you with to serve your supernatural prudence, to aid it in the work of your sanctification—so many angels who will descend faithfully from Heaven at the hour of your penance, of your humiliations, of your agonies; but not as the angel came to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, for He brought Him strength—much strength, indeed, but not consolation, because the Father did not will that moment to be the fit one for consolation; whilst your own angels will bring you at once both the one and the other—both strength and consolation.

After that, though justice should keep silence; though we should not have so many reasons to hate, and, therefore, to ill-treat ourselves; though prudence should have in our regard on this point neither prescription nor counsel, it would suffice for love to speak to us, as it does, to oblige us to a mortified life, to inspire us with a relish and a passion for it, and to enable us to form the habit of it. Let us bless our Lord; there are always in the Church souls for whom this motive is more decisive than all others, and who, wounded solely by His arrow of love, will mortify themselves all their life. Assuredly, love was present in justice; it was its soul, and gave to it its ardour; it was in this hatred of oneself, what we have shown is so legitimate, and which love itself had enkindled: love was not absent from that prudence which we have seen is so active in its kindness and so firm in its compassion; it lighted up its eye and conducted its hand. It is a law, on earth as well as in heaven, that wherever there is any good there is also love; for love

and goodness are truly one and the same thing, and in reality and in truth, this one thing is God. But the love we are speaking of now, as a new and abundant fountain of mortification, is the special Love of Jesus—of Jesus, as our Saviour and Redeemer. Yes! God would not have given us an express command to mortify ourselves; our sins, and what evil still remains in us would not have called for it so urgently; it would not have been the natural and indispensable remedy for our infirmities; it would have been sufficient that God had demanded of Jesus to mortify His life, as He did, in order to induce and urge us to mortify our own. Now, you know if God demanded this of Jesus—I have told you that God only sent and gave Him to us, God only caused Him to be born among us, that He might die, and die all His life, by the infallible, evident, and always actual foresight of His horrible death, and by the mortified state in which He ordained He should live. And what the Father asked, no one is ignorant that Jesus has given. He gave it cordially; He gave it abundantly; He gave it always. He gave it cordially: ah! think how His Heart was in His works!—in all His works, even in the humblest. All were, in fact, sacrifices and benefits, acts of religion and of charity, which glorified the Father and redeemed the world. Yet, as His love was His weight, the more powerfully and directly His works advanced this glory and this redemption, the more His Heart was centered in them; or rather, the more He put Himself, poured Himself, precipitated Himself into them. Now, nothing accomplished so efficaciously and so directly this two-fold end, the glory of God and our redemption, as the state of death, in which He lived for thirty-three years of

His life on earth, as a Victim devoted to sacrifice, ready for the sacrifice, and already sacrificed. What God demanded, Jesus gave superabundantly : He never calculated ; He gave nothing, not even Himself, with measure ; but He voluntarily reduced Himself to such a life, so retired, so humble, so buried—in a word, so mortified, that it requires faith—that is to say, a direct operation in our minds of God's almighty power, to enable us to recognise this life to be divine. And what Jesus has thus given with an immense Heart, He has always given, from the crib to the cross, where all ends in death ; from the cross to the Holy Eucharist, in which all finally disappears. It is thus that He has loved us, and that He has proved His love. Now, if such is the character, the pledge, and the extent of His love, what ought to be the extent, the pledge, and the character of our own ? Let all other reason disappear, this alone is sufficient ; Jesus was mortified, then I ought to be so too ; and if I am not so, if I do not try at least to be so, I may say that I love Him, and perhaps I may think so, but I am under an illusion, and in truth, I do not love Him. We do not love unless we aspire to be united to Him Whom we love ; we are not united to Him unless we resemble Him, we do not resemble Him unless we imitate Him.

And the crowning point of all is that Jesus did not choose nor endure this mortified life for its own sake, but for us ; for us, inasmuch as in His wisdom He judged that there was no surer means of touching, of persuading, of attracting, of gaining us, and at length of saving us ; happy if, even at this price, He had gained and saved the whole world ; He was mortified for our sakes also, in that He made Himself our representative, substituting Himself personally for us, clothing Himself

with our condition as sinners, taking upon Himself all our debts, and, in order to pay them, enduring the frightful chastisements that our crimes had merited. It is said of jealousy that "it is as hard as hell" (1 Cant. viii. 6). The love which Jesus bears us might well light up a fire of jealousy ; and this fire, kindling a divine ardour in the new man, may well become a punishment and a furnace to the old man. It is not tolerable to see Jesus carry our burdens, and for us to walk constantly by his side, with head erect, and shoulders free ; to see Him drowned in suffering, and stripped of all, and not to be willing to endure any want or any suffering. We cannot accept the fact that His life, as the Lamb without spot, His life all holy, His life as the man-God, should be contradicted, afflicted, despised, immolated, and that our life should be easy, tranquil, joyous, honoured, and triumphant. "It is not in jest that I have loved thee," said He one day to His servant Angela. "This remark," writes that dear Saint, "smote my heart with a mortal blow, and I do not know how it was I did not die ; for my eyes were opened, and I saw in the light, how true were our Lord's words. I saw the acts, the real effects of this love, and to what a point, in truth, it had led the Son of God. I saw what He had endured in His life and at His death for my love, by the mighty power of that unspeakable love that consumed Him. No, no, He had not loved me in jest, but with a love terribly serious, a love true, deep, perfect, and which was in His inmost soul ; and then my love, my love for Him appeared to me only a sort of unhappy pleasantry, as an abominable lie. Then my grief became intolerable, and I thought I should die on the spot. And other words came which increased my suffering ; 'it is not in jest that I have loved thee, nor is it in jest

that I made Myself your servant ; it is not from afar that I have touched thee.' 'Ah ! for myself,' I exclaimed, 'it is wholly the reverse. My love has been only a jest, a lie, an affectation. I have never been willing to approach Thee in sincerity, in order to share with Thee in the labours Thou hast endured for me, and which Thou hast willed to endure. I have not served Thee in truth and with perfection, but with negligence and with duplicity.'"*

It is thus that the love of Jesus throws the Saints into confusion and inflames them, and impels them, as it were, by force to live only for Him and like to Him, which is the life of mortification, and a total dying to themselves. This mortification, which comes from love, is, without dispute, most sweet, although it may cause at the same time infinite torments, as we see not only in the Blessed Angela, but in St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Teresa, and in St. Magdaline of Pazzi, without naming others. Commonly also it is the most generous kind of mortification, and easily becomes the most persevering and constant.

The source of this Divinely mortified life is the continual meditation of the Holy Passion of Jesus. It is what our Lord said to the great Franciscan nun of Foligno : "Those whose inward eye is fixed on My Passion and My death, on My death, the life and salvation of the world, on My death, and not elsewhere, such are My true children, and the rest are not so." It was from meditation on the Passion of Christ, that the first Christians derived that admirable ardour, and that glad and joyous readiness to die, which so distinguished

* The Life of the Visions and Instructions of the Blessed Angela de Foligno, chap. xxiii., translated into French by Ern. Hollo.

all the acts of their martyrdom. It was thus the incomparable St. Ignatius of Antioch nourished that strange passion which moved him to write to the Romans: "Spare me; do not wish for me any other blessing than this supreme blessing which awaits me, of being sacrificed. It is good for me to have my setting in this world, that I may have in God my rising . . . grant me the grace to let me imitate my God in His Passion . . . my love is crucified; therefore, it is that the fire which burns in me, is not for material things; it is the living water of grace which cries within me, Come to the Father! . . . I am hungry for the bread of God, the bread which gives life, the bread which is the Flesh of Jesus the Son of God, born in these latter days of the race of Abraham and David; I am athirst for the drink of God—that is to say, for the Blood of Him Who is the "charity that never falleth away, and eternal life;"* transforming the one and placing it in us, meriting the other and opening it to us. The school which has made such martyrs, will always produce true penitents.

It remains for us still to point out a fifth and last source of Christian mortification. It is the spirit of religion in which worship develops itself in adoration and ends in sacrifice. This point of view will also strike

* *Nolite mihi præbere plus quàm immoler Deo. . . Bonum est à mundo occidere ad Deum ut in ipso oriar. . . Concedite mihi imitatore[m] esse passionis Dei mei. . . Amor meus crucifixus est, nec est in me ignis materiæ amans, sed vivens et loquens aqua in me est, mihi interiùs dicens: Veni ad Patrem. . . Panem Dei volo, panem cœlestem, panem vitæ qui est caro Jesu Christi, Filii Dei, qui posteriori tempore ex semine David et Abraham factus est; et potum Dei volo, sanguinem ipsius, qui est charitas incorruptibilis et vita æterna.—Epist. ad Rom.*

some minds, and they will be by no means the least intelligent or the least enlightened.

I do not come to this source till after I have spoken of that of love. Is this to say that it is superior to love; and truly is there anything superior to love? No; if we take in the whole of love, with all its degrees and all its acts. Yes; if we only regard it in its first, essential, and universal act, which is affection. If we restrict love to this act, we must agree that worship and adoration surpass it. First, of all—supposing even that love, properly speaking, was not a relation possible, or permitted between the creature and God—the adoration of God on the part of the creature would still be required. When I speak of love, I evidently mean the love of charity or of friendship, the product of sanctifying grace, and by that means also, that participation in the Divine nature, which, in the creature, is the foundation of the supernatural state. If, in effect, this superior order did not exist for us, and if reason alone teaching us to know God, we had with Him only relations founded on this natural knowledge, man would, no doubt, still owe to God a sincere affection and his first affection; but God being then more a Master than a Father, and ruling His creature from the infinite height of His Divinity, where He would remain, as it were, enclosed, and be for ever alone in His joy—worship and adoration would be due to Him even more than love. But besides, and it is this which makes adoration superior to love, adoration in the creature, at least, is the supreme end—the end necessarily wished for by God, and therefore, His repose. Love is never satisfied, unless it is able to adore what it loves, and thus becomes a religion and a worship. We see this in the sentiments with which, even in the order of Nature, it in-

spires those whom it possesses, and in the words it employs and which it is forced to employ, to express its sentiments. Made expressly for God, because that which is the most Divine in the soul is Himself, it has, even if it vents itself elsewhere, an irresistible need to adore its object. Only when this object is not really Divine, when consequently, to adore it, is not lawful, this worship of love becomes idolatrous, and then adoration infallibly kills love, because it throws it outside the truth, which is the first condition of its life. If on the contrary, truth permits love to adore its object, if especially it commands it, adoration makes the life of love, it is its perfection, its joy, its paradise. You understand by this, in what sense, and for what reason, adoration surpasses love. It is still love, but love raised to its highest exercise, and in its most excellent act.

Now this adoration, which is the end or extreme limit of love, has also itself an end, and this end is, sacrifice. If then, you consider things closely, you will easily see that Christian mortification has all the characteristics of sacrifice. It has it, first of all, in Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the Judge of His Humanity, He is its Divine soul, and its Saviour, but more, He is its Priest; this Humanity is its Victim. Now as He is the Priest of His Humanity, we become, by His Grace and in His Strength, the priests of our own humanity. When, in the mystery of our justification, we received Christ spiritually, sharing in all His Divine qualities, we share at the same time, in His Divine functions. Because He is King, we are kings; because He is Judge, we are judges; and because He is Priest, we are priests. Saint Peter calls us “a chosen generation, a royal and sacerdotal race” (1 Pet. ii. 9). Not that all Christians are kings to be seated on

earthly thrones ; not that they are priests to go up to the altar, and there offer the sacrifice instituted by God ; but they are qualified and empowered to offer in private, secret victims, and especially to offer themselves. St. Thomas teaches that the character imprinted on the soul by the sacrament of Baptism, is a real participation in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ.*

The soul which is baptised is then authoritatively the priest of its own body ; the man regenerated in Christ is the priest of the man fallen and become old in Adam. The old man, considered in himself, is, what the Jewish Ritual calls a victim for sin ; the he-goats and the rams, victims used in these sacrifices, were the figures of this man decrepit and sinful. But as it is the whole man who suffers in this immolation, even after we profit by the Redemption, by appropriating to ourselves the merits of our Redeemer ; this sacrifice which mortifies our flesh, is not only satisfactory (which it would not be, if it were not united by faith to the sacrifice of Christ), but it has besides, like the sacrifice of our Saviour, the virtue of thanking Him for the graces received, that of obtaining new graces, and finally, the more sublime virtue of rendering to God, the worship of *Latria*, and the honour of adoration.

Regarded in this point of view, mortification assumes all the characteristics of the works that are wrought in the Sanctuary, and which are wrought only there. It is very grave, very tranquil, and very holy. It is also very interior ; and even when the act of mortification is not

* *Totus ritus Christianæ religionis derivatur à sacerdotio Christi, cujus sacerdotio configurantur fideles secundum sacramentales characteres, qui nihil aliud sunt quàm quædam participationes sacerdotii Christi ab ipso derivatæ.*—Summ. 3a pars. Quæst. lxxiii., art 3.

interior, the spirit which causes the act is so. It unites you very profoundly, and consequently very intimately, to Jesus. You do more than follow and imitate Him ; you penetrate into the heart of His mystery, and you co-operate in His work, which is the most eminent, the most sacred, and the most divine of all His Works, namely, the work of His Priesthood. Justice purified you by detaching you from yourselves, which is the effect also, each in its own way, of the holy hatred of yourselves, and of wise prudence. Love transforms you, by conforming you to Jesus. Religion, sacrifice, mortification, done in the spirit of religion and sacrifice, accomplish your consummation in Jesus, in delivering you up, in your whole being, with Him, and like Him, to His Father, to His wills, His rights, His perfections. These certainties, certain in an excellent degree, those attractions of which our Lord spoke, when He said, “and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, that is to say, crucified and sacrificed, I will draw all things to myself” (St. John xii. 32). They further open out to the Christian soul the priceless hope of spiritual fecundity ; for our Lord has said, “Amen, amen, I say unto you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (St. John xii. 24). He, Jesus, our living Bread, but first of all, the heavenly grain of wheat, thrown and cast here below by the Hand of the Father, if He had not consented to die, He would have remained, doubtless, what He is, the Word incarnate, the true Son of God made man, the Heir of His Father, the Beauty of all beauties, rich with all treasures, infinitely filled with all blessings, infinitely happy ; in fact, He would have kept all for Himself alone ; He would not have become the eldest of the

human family, He would not have communicated to us anything of all His Divine fulness, and no portion would have flowed down on us, of the grace of the Hypostatic union.* But He died, died sacrificed; and then, as the ointment of Mary Magdalen flowed over and bathed His Whole Body when she broke the vessel in which it was contained, so all that it pleased God to lay up in Him flowed over on us all, and made of His life our life, of His destiny our destiny, of His Father our Father, of His God our God. These are those "best ointments" which make the Bride run after the Bridegroom (Cant. i. 2), and to unite herself to Him, in order to espouse His actions when she had espoused His Person. To this soul thus subjugated and ravished with love the altar becomes her country—or better still, as it were, her nuptial dwelling. She lives only to die, because this death, united to that of Christ, appeases, attracts, rejoices, glorifies God; and snatching souls from evil and from darkness, brings them forth to the true light, and to life eternal. Then no account is made of what is human. As the priest, when he is saying Mass, keeps himself isolated and above the people, God is the Master, God is all-holy, and Jesus offers to Him in us and by us what the Church calls "*The Action*"—that is to say, the Holy Sacrifice. The activity and energy of our soul are then employed to keep our whole being in the Hands of this Divine Pontiff, Who makes our will comply with His will, and to submit holily to the most holy action of

* It is understood that we speak here, not of what might have happened on the hypothesis of another economy, assuredly possible; but of what would have been, if God, having decreed, as He has done, to sanctify and to save the world only by the *death* of the Word Incarnate, that death which Jesus has undergone freely, had not really taken place.

Jesus. Because all is delivered to Him by us, nothing is spared on His part ; He mortifies, He sacrifices even the smallest movements of the natural life, as He mortified Magdalen when, seeing her too eager and still human in her love, and not taking sufficient notice of the new and superior state into which He had just entered by His resurrection, He said to her : “ Do not touch Me ” (St. John xx. 17). And it is not only the indiscreet vivacity of the natural life which Jesus mortifies—it is also the good and sanctified nature that He immolates, as a victim more pure, and consequently more worthy to be offered to God. Thus He acted towards Mary, the holy and immaculate virgin, when from the height of His Cross He said to her : “ Woman, behold thy son ” (St. John xix. 26), meaning St. John. Finally, He makes the sword of mortification penetrate even what is most elevated and most pure within us, what exalts and purifies all the rest,—I mean our intimate relations with God ; and this sword now becomes the knife which slays the sacrificial victim. Reproducing in His cherished member that mystery of unspeakable suffering through which He Himself has passed, and which crowned all the rest, He takes from the soul all that is sensible, all that is visible, all that is human, in these Divine communications, and forces it to utter that cry which was wrung first of all from the lips of His own humanity in the agonies of death : “ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? ” (St. Matt. xxvii. 47). In this consists the perfect immolation ! But take care : in the sacerdotal functions there are some which are exclusively reserved to the bishop, and consequently forbidden to priests ; so, as to these last and truly divine immolations, let Jesus, believe me, let Jesus be the Bishop of your souls,

(1 Peter ii. 25), let Jesus make this immolation in you, if He so thinks fit; and if He condescends to ask it of you, make the offering with love; but for you, priests of the second order, of yourselves mount not so high.

One only of these five points of view, seriously meditated on and kept habitually present in the soul by a lively faith, is sufficient to establish you in the practice of mortification. But if you join them together, whether by making use of each of them successively, or by instilling them all into your mind at once, we do not think that anyone can resist their influence. Now, if you have the signal grace of being thus vanquished by the truth, by justice, and by love, you may be assured of seeing within you the fulness of the reign of God.

Devotion to the death of Jesus is universal in the Church; in truth, we owe everything to this blessed death. I venture to say that, consequently, all the Christian virtues ought to be specially devout to mortification; for what the death of Jesus has been and has done in the world, mortification is and does, in the order of virtues—all of them owe to it, their birth and their development, their scope, and their peace. It is mortification that maintains the purity of the atmosphere in which they live; no dark mist can ever settle on their soul. Thanks be to mortification, not a drop of heavenly dew dries up or goes astray, before it has watered this soil in which they all are planted. It would not be exact to say that it nourishes them itself; but it secures for God the liberty the soil has want of, for their nourishment. Mortification is the fence round the divine pastures, keeping the sheep of the Good Pastor sheltered from the attacks of robbers and of wolves. It keeps guard around the secret place where God and the soul commence their

eternal converse, and prevents any interruption breaking in upon their discourse. The Scripture says: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. xiv. 14). This refers, first of all, to that voluntary and moral death which is holy mortification. Blessed then are the mortified; none experience as they do, that even in this world, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (St. Matt. xxii. 32).

ON TEMPTATION.

It is the teaching of Holy Scripture, and all history is its comment, it is the experience and the universal complaint of mankind, "that life is a temptation" (Job vii. 1). It is so in itself; it is so at every instant; it is so, even to the end; it is so for all. Here, then, is a general, constant, and authoritative fact, which has, consequently, the character of a law. No condition is withdrawn from its influence; no degree of virtue is a dispensation from its attacks; but this law seems strange. We can understand the law of work. So many and such beautiful prerogatives as God bestows upon us in our creation, are not given to remain idle and sterile. Man is, in other respects also, an active being. For him to live—to live especially as a moral being—is to act. There is an end to be gained. If his existence had not an object, it could not be explained,—we might ask if life could be supportable. But man has the instinct, the idea, the desire of a perfection, and of a happiness, for which he feels that he exists, and which alone will give him peace. His want, as well as his duty, is to arrive at this object, and, therefore, to tend towards it; which he cannot do without action and without work. If, betraying this need, he repudiates this duty, he is immediately constrained to have a lower esteem of himself, and this is

his first punishment. We understand, then, the necessity of work. We understand, too, that sometimes this work implies an effort. This effort is necessary, if the end in view is noble and of great importance. Besides, we admit to a certain point, the need of a struggle; we accept it without difficulty in the very inferior order of our relations with Nature, and we commonly find that the joy, the glory of having mastered her laws, sometimes after great resistance, under the empire of our human intelligence and will, more than counterbalances the difficulties and trials by which we are wont to purchase back this triumph.

But temptation—that is to say, the invitation to evil, the impulsion towards it; seduction, artifice, violence—in a word, the many powers enrolled against us in the the service of evil, surrounding us, persecuting us, in order to make us think evil, will evil, do evil, live an evil life—alas! and die a bad death; all this being man's daily history, the history of each individual, the history of all men, is much more than a mystery to the mind; it causes in the heart an emotion akin to that which is given us by a scandal, and at which the soul is terrified. Difficulties, trials, however great and heavy, become a burden which is light to bear, compared with temptation. It is not the judgment which the children of the world pass upon them. Suffering, in their view, is the supreme, if not, the only evil. In the judgment of the children of God, suffering is not the great problem to explain; it is not even the great calamity. The principal subject of their astonishment, as of their anguish, is that sin, here below, is so close to us, and so active, so bold, and so powerful an enemy; and that being already by nature so weak, and apparently so unarmed, we should find our-

selves so allured by it, so sympathising with it, so open to its assaults, and, therefore, so easily conquered—almost conquered before even we are attacked. It is this evil which is rightly called "*legion*," and which on all sides attacks and solicits us.

Again, if by some very generous efforts, if by means of certain victories sufficiently illustrious to give us the right of regarding them as decisive, we could consider ourselves quite secure against those enemies which are without, and those which are within; if, for example, by renouncing all for Jesus Christ, by quitting the world for the cloister, and consecrating ourselves by profession to contemplation and the love of the realities that are eternal, we passed into a sphere in which we must labour (and labour the more, as we are more free), but where at least we might live, sheltered from those hateful delusions, from those detestable fascinations, from that darkness, from those questions, from those contradictions, shall I say, from those hesitations more terrible than all the rest; we should find, perhaps, that our deliverance from such great evils, is not purchased at too dear a rate. But neither the most heroic resolutions, nor the perfect states in which they may place us, have this virtue, to hinder us from being tempted. He who at the hour of his baptism or of his conversion, has received this admonition of the Holy Spirit: "My child, when you come to the service of God, prepare yourself for temptation" (Eccles. ii. 1); if, ravished by a grace to the perpetual exercise of which he has constantly remained faithful, he enters resolutely into the way of the perfect, he hears the same voice saying to him, "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tobias

xii. 13), and, "I will show thee how great things thou must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts ix. 16).

The fact is, and everyone knows it, that the austere solitude of Bethlehem did not hinder St. Jerome from being haunted and tormented by the recollections of Pagan Rome; that having withdrawn into the desert, St. Anthony found there numerous enemies, and underwent frightful struggles; that stretched on his couch of agony, after eighty years passed in the most rigorous penance, and in the most devoted service of God, St. Hilarion was there visited and importuned by Satan; that St. Martin, so greatly in favour with God, as to raise up three dead persons from the grave, had, however, unceasingly to defend himself from the evil spirits; and lastly, that St. Paul himself, enlightened by Christ, the vanquisher of idolatry and the doctor of the world, was compelled by temptation, by its violence and its continuance, to demand grace and mercy of God, Who promising him His help, expressly refused to take away from him this "fiery trial" (2 Cor. xii. 8).

There is, then, no illusion in this matter. Whoever we are, wherever we go, whatever we do, temptation follows us, more closely than our own shadow. It comes from our adversities; it falls upon us from on high, it springs up from beneath the earth, and buds forth under our feet; it is in the air we breathe, in the ray of the sun which enlightens our steps, in the pebble on which we stumble in our way, in the flower which blooms in the hedge, which borders our path; it is in the couch on which we sleep, in the book we study, in the oratory where we pray; it is in our relatives, in our friends, in our fellow-travellers; it is in that which is most sacred, as in that which is most profane; it may approach us from

the altar, and even come to us from the tabernacle ; finally, and especially, it is in us and springs forth from us as from its centre, as from an inexhaustible fountain, and it will be thus with us, even to our last sigh.

We could not omit to treat of this subject. Enlightened as to our last end, and knowing by the science of our vocation, the explanation Almighty God gives us of our human life ; having the faith to contemplate always, through this holy vocation, our heavenly and eternal beauty, which is our perfect conformity to Jesus ; seeing in this divine light, the way which leads to the end, and prepared to walk in it, as it is fitting, by the combined action of fear and of hope ; knowing, finally, that before all things, and from the first step, we ought to draw from our faith the energy necessary to renounce decisively both the world and ourselves—that is to say, to keep ourselves humble, and live mortified ; we had still, and necessarily, to pre-occupy ourselves with the accidents that happen on the way. It was necessary also to point out to you in advance, both the slippery declivities which we find there, and the obstructions we meet with, the false tracks which decoy us, and the snares that are laid for us in our path. In short, under pain of giving you an incomplete instruction, we are bound to explain to you this fact of temptation, which is so important, and on many accounts so mysterious, in order to communicate to you the secret of making these obstacles aid your progress, these scandals assist your perfection, these combats add to your glory—in a word, this evil (for in many ways it is an evil), this temporal evil, advance your eternal happiness.

We think that our task will be sufficiently fulfilled if, after explaining to you the fact of temptation so that you will exactly comprehend its nature, we show you the con-

ditions in which God has arranged that this singular fact should so often happen to us ; after which we shall only have to point out to you briefly but compendiously the means by the use of which you, will be able to overcome your temptations and make them profitable to your soul.

I.

We do not believe we can do better, in order to give you an exact and complete idea of temptation, than to recall to you its origin, and to study with you the causes which brought it about.

Let us set out from a great and ruling principle, which we beg you to keep always present to your mind, as a precious light in the many and difficult paths, which we shall have to travel together. God did not make the life of His creatures a temptation ; as He did not create irrational creatures to lead us astray, so, in like manner, He did not create His rational creatures to be led astray. Temptation, which we have called a law, and which is one in certain respects, is yet neither a law nor a fact of primitive and Divine institution ; it is a fact which is secondary, inferior, abnormal, and therefore accidental. It is so much cockle cast by the free will of His creatures into this vast field of the world, in which the Father of the family had sown only good wheat, with the intention of gathering in a good and plentiful harvest. It is no matter whatever, that this evil, in showing itself, does not take Almighty God unawares ; that afterwards He draws good from it, and makes what in itself is a hindrance to His designs, an actual help to bring them about. It follows, then, that in principle, temptation is not from God ; nor is the sin, from God, which is often its consequence ; nor is the sorrow which is its appointed

fruit, from God; neither is death, which is the end and the wages of sin, from God (Rom. vi. 23). The Scripture instructs us in a positive manner: "God tempts no man" (St. James i. 13). The life of creatures, according to the appointment and the wish of God, is not, then, a temptation—it is simply a trial;* and that it is a trial is nothing less than a necessity.

Since God has created beings that are free—beings that He loves and intends to honour to that degree, that they who did not make themselves, are placed in a position to become perfect, that they who are nothing in their beginning, should become the true and indispensable authors of that glorious happiness which is their end,—now, in order to effect all this, it was quite necessary that He should leave them in "the hand of their own counsel," and that He should give them the time and the opportunity of choice, without which there is no moral act and no merit.† Now, to do this is to commence an undertaking and to make an attempt.

From eternity, doubtless, God knew what would be its issue; but this knowledge is in Him alone, and for Him alone. So far as this knowledge is concerned it does not influence ourselves. A man from the top of a mountain may see me walking in the plane below, and beholding, thanks to his position, an horizon far more vast than I can see, he may perceive before me either an obstacle

* It is in the sense that the same Holy Spirit who tells us by St. James that God does not tempt any man, tells us by Moses that God tempted Abraham; and more explicitly in the Book of Deuteronomy, xiii. 3: "The Lord your God trieth you that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul."

† Hoc requirebat conditio naturæ hominis, ut propriæ voluntati relinqueretur.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. clxv., art. 1 ad 2.

which I am soon to encounter, or perhaps he may see the end of my journey, which is still hidden from myself; but I remain always the master to choose my way, to slacken or to quicken my pace, to stop if I think it well, to sit down, or to fall asleep. Now, such is the relation of every traveller on this earth with this sublime and all-seeing Witness in Whose sight our life is continually flowing onward. God knows, but we do not know; God foresees what will become of us; but what we shall become, we are not yet; and we shall only become what we are to be, on the conditions and by the means which God Himself has established—that is to say, by time, and by a continual exercise of our free will; for, by the will of God, we are free. Far from absorbing secondary causes, or falsifying or impeding their action, on the contrary, it is the first cause which makes them true, active, and efficacious. Nothing, then, is more real than our liberty—I mean that power which is divinely given us to be ourselves the principle of our moral acts, of doing them, or of not doing them, of directing them in such or such a manner, to such or such an end. But if our actions depend thus on ourselves, it follows that our final destiny, depending on our actions, is in itself, and for us, uncertain, and, as we have already said, that our life is a trial.

Is this not, in other respects, the essential condition of all life, which is transitory? Is there any created being which is constituted otherwise in its principle, in its substance, and in its elements? Is the best endowed nature anything else than a point of departure? Is anything that is born, born ripe and finished? We exist—that is a great deal; but we must work, and it is for work that we exist; as also we only work, in order to arrive at that perfection of existence which is the

full bloom of our being, and consequently, its glory and its felicity. In short, the trial is only the normal passage of this elementary existence to that life of perfection and consummation; it is the labour and the crisis of the formation of beings; the means, and altogether the action of their progress; the direct and only way which leads them to their last end.*

Thus we find this law everywhere in nature and in society. The germination of seeds, and their increase to the harvest-time, is a trial; education is a trial; those examinations, those noviciates, those stages, which among civilised people are the necessary preamble of every career, and the entrance to every employment—all these are a trial. In short, “he who is not tempted—that is to say, tried,” saith the Holy Spirit, “what doth he know, and what do we know of him?” (Eccles. xxxiv. 9). God, then, tries and proves His creatures; and if we consider this fact attentively, it is practically the explanation of all His conduct in their regard, in this world. Nothing resembles less what we call a temptation.

It is thus that God tried the angels. With all respect for the opinions of other theologians touching the nature of the test that those magnificent spirits had to go through, before being admitted to see God face to face, we share the sentiment of Suarez, which is, besides, the opinion of the greater number.† According to Suarez, their trial consisted in this—that in consequence of the revelation that had been made to them, they were bound

* Saint Paul lays down this law when he says: “God . . . will make with the temptation, issue”—that is, a way of escape.—I Cor. x. 13.

† See Suarez de Angelis, lib. vii., cap. xiii. No. 13 et seq.

to believe, to love and adore that mystery of the Word Incarnate, "which it pleased God," saith St. Paul, "to make the centre, the foundation, and the perfection of all things" (Ephes. i. 10, Coloss. i. 16). They had to accept the truth, that God, wishing to unite Himself personally to one of His creatures, in order by this means to unite Himself to all the rest of the creation, chose for this design, not their nature, but ours: so that through eternity a man was to be the head and the King of the Angels; and that they themselves who had received immediately their being from the Divinity, would receive its fulness and its perfection by the means and the influence of a humanity, in which, doubtless, God would live in Person; but which remained, nevertheless, a true humanity. We can understand, that in certain respects, this trial was a difficult one for the angels. But what we know of the character of God, clearly convinces us, that, considering the lights and the energy with which they were endowed,* this trial ought to have been most easy and most sweet. Certainly, pride alone, arising from the union of their free will with that possibility of falling, to which every creature is subject, impelled them to revolt against a design, in which all the Divine perfections shine forth with so much splendour, and which is the masterpiece of His love. Still, you see that it is a pure and simple trial; it is in no way, properly speaking, a temptation; and if we are willing to admit that, in rising up against the Christ, the first of the rebel angels tempted the others, which is possible, but by no means certain,† this temptation is

* Vid. S. Thom. 1a pars. Quæst. lxxii., art. 3, et Suarez, *ubi supra*, lib. v., cap. 4 et seq.

† Vid. Suarez *ibid.*, lib. vii., cap. 17.

purely his doing ; incontestably he himself was not tempted, and God had nothing to do with it.*

Adam, created after the angels, and only a little below them (Ps. viii. 6), ought to have been, as they were, only tried without being tempted. The trial for him was to abstain from eating the fruit of the only tree from which God interdicted him, while granting him the free and full use of all the rest. If we simply regard the primitive design of God, all that man was bound to was this act of obedience. Not but that he had other duties also, and first of all, like the angels, to believe, to hope, and to love ; but this outward act of subjection appears to have been the official and sacramental sign of that inward homage to which he was bound. Assuredly, if it had pleased God not to create the angels, or if, being created by Him, these angels, without exception, had remained faithful to Him, no power could have influenced man to evil, and Adam would not have felt the shadow of a temptation.

Now, what God had not wished at first, what God would never have done, the fallen angel was able to do, and God permitted him to do it. Have we the right to be astonished at this, and especially to murmur and to complain? The mysteries of the permissions of God, or the mysteries of His works, are all one to faith ; and in presence of the one as of the other, it were much better that the heart should adore, than the mind interrogate with curiosity. All, however, is not mystery here. Man is not isolated in this world, in which, moreover, nothing is isolated. The universe is a harmony ;

* *Tentare inducendo ad malum non est nisi jam depravati per culpam...Angelus a suo superiori, id est Deo, in bono perfici potuit, non ad peccatum induci. "Deus enim intentator malorum est" (St. James). S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. clxv., art. 1.*

each being finds itself bound to other beings, acting or being acted upon. Everything which has life, receives and gives, obeys and commands: each following its nature, its gradation, its function. "It is an order universally established by Divine Providence," admirably observes St. Thomas, "that as in the sphere of reasoning, principles, which are immovable, rule and regulate conclusions; so in the sphere of physical realities, beings which approach the nearest to God by the sublimity, the stability, and energy of their nature, rule and govern other beings who are less perfect."* Apart from the fact that this order is so divinely beautiful, that it constitutes of itself an unanswerable proof of the existence of God, and a revelation of His nature, it is for all creatures an unparalleled benefit. It is an order of love, of communication, of union, in which power is subservient to goodness, and the right to lead implies the duty to serve, in which what is great inclines to what is little, what is strong aids and protects what is weak, in which ownership becomes the principle of division, and each thing remaining distinct, there is, however, no separation; in which everything, in a word, represents to the delighted minds of the faithful, the likeness, impaired indeed, but still the likeness, of that primitive and unspeakable life, in which all is likewise gift, communication, union, and unity; in which Three Persons, remaining themselves eternally, and keeping the order

* *Secundum ordinem divinæ Providentiæ hoc in rebus omnibus invenitur, quod mobilia et variabilia per immobilia et invariabilia moventur et regulantur. Sicut omnia corporalia per substantias spirituales et immobiles, corpora inferiora per superiora quæ sunt invariabilia secundum substantiam: sed nos ipsi regulamur circa conclusiones per principia quæ invariabiliter tenemus.*—I p. Quæst. cxiii., art. I.

of their several relations to one another, have yet only one Being, one state, one happiness, and are all Three undividedly One, and the same Divinity.

Now, we are created in this order, and we occupy the middle place in it. As the inferior world is naturally subject to us, we are naturally subject to the angels; and the Scripture testifies that if they are called by that name, which denotes their office, it is because from the beginning they were destined to serve the interests of God in the human family—that is to say, to assist men in the great work of their sanctification and salvation. Without speaking of that grace which perfects their nature, nor of that glory into which the good angels have entered, and which is their crowning grace, their nature was already wholly adapted to this sweet ministry, in this sense, that it constituted them our superiors in power, and gave them the means of assisting and protecting us. The sin of the angels that fell, has changed, it is true, their entire moral condition; it has turned aside and perverted the natural direction of their thoughts and of their wills, but it has not destroyed either their substance or the principles of their operation. For it is also the Divine order, that evil, having already this great power to trouble the relations, and to alter the qualities of things, cannot, however, corrupt the original constitution of intelligent creatures, which makes them what they are, both in their nature and in their personality. That which has come forth from nothing, never returns again to nothing. It pleases God to continue, by this preservation, to honour His own gifts even in those who abuse them, and to do whatever good can be done to those beings who, as far as they are concerned, strive only to do Him evil.

That the fallen angel can turn against us that natural power that God wished him to employ in our service ; that in place of helping to save us, he can tempt us in order to destroy us ; this is the effect of that excellent order which God Himself established among His creatures, binding them one to the other, and making of them all one great society.

It may be said : “but leaving to Satan his nature, could not God hinder him from acting?” For this is what we never fail to do among ourselves, with regard to any malefactor. If a man has shown himself to be a malefactor by his actions, though he is not always punished with death, he is at least imprisoned ; which is at once an act of justice and of charity : justice towards him who has deserved punishment, charity towards others whom his wickedness might injure. Doubtless God could do so, and you may believe that He has done so, to a great extent. Besides, such was man in the terrestrial paradise, that even if the devil had employed all his strength against him, he would have been much more a fool to be despised than an enemy to vanquish. And when we see him attack Adam so indirectly and so timidly, whom he knew was his adversary,* we understand, that in the degree compatible with his pride, he felt his own weakness. Yet, we must agree, that God could have hindered this attack, so cringing, indirect, and timid, and so little to be feared. He thought it

* *Impugnatio cui cum difficultate resistitur pœnalis est. Sed homo in statu innocentiae poterat absque omni difficultate tentationi resistere.*—St. Thom. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxv., art. 1 ad 3. St. Augustine says on this subject : “*Princeps vitiorum vincit Adam de luto terræ ad imaginem Dei factum, pudicitia armatum, temperantia compositum, claritate splendidum.*”—Concio ad Catechum. contr. Jud. et Pagan. c. 2.

better to permit it. It appeared to Him wise and good, that this being already so great, and whom He had once crowned king of the world, should have an opportunity, by rejecting so absurd and so miserable a suggestion, of purchasing the honour and advantage of overthrowing for ever this giant who had troubled heaven, and thus of rescuing, by a single effort, all his posterity, from the assaults, if not from the hatred, of hell. For it is the teaching of Catholic doctors, that if Adam had gained this one and this easy triumph, he would have ensured by it, his own perseverance in grace; and that henceforth, instead of being born "children of wrath," because they are defiled with sin, his descendants, conceived in sanctity, would all have been born in justice, that is to say, in the grace of God, and would have been the heirs of all those privileges which He had conferred on their father Adam.* And you may thoroughly believe, that as Adam knew the terrible chastisements which to the end of time would be the punishment of his provocation, he was also not ignorant of the splendid rewards attached by God to his fidelity. Certainly, had he had no other buckler, this two-fold and infallible light should have made him invulnerable.

God has then definitely permitted the breath of the impure spirit to traverse, for a moment, the luminous and clear atmosphere in which our first father lived and breathed. As an after condition, He permitted this short and feeble temptation to enter, under His all-powerful control, as a portion of that necessary trial which He made of His beloved creatures. With the exception of the help He gives, and the watchfulness He exercises, you see that He remains absolutely passive ;

* Vide St. Thom. I p. Quæst. c., art. I.

and even this outward evil, subordinate and truly, I venture to say, more apparent than real, He only permits in view of an immense good which He wishes to procure for man, and through him, to the whole of humanity : as also, He only permitted that inexcusable fault and that terrible fall of Adam, because He had resolved to draw from it finally this priceless blessing, this measureless grace, this supreme and infinite glory, of the redemption of the world by Christ. By which you can see that evil is only permitted to show itself, because it is vanquished in principle, and reparation is made for it beforehand ; not only reparation is made, but compensation is given, and even more than that—the evil is infinitely overbalanced by the blessing of which it becomes indirectly the cause.

I have not yet said all ; and before I go further, I am anxious to establish this point ; doubtless, after this sin, of which God alone knows the enormity, Adam suddenly saw his condition changed, and consequently, that of all his race. Even after he had received, by the anticipated application of the merits of the promised Saviour, with the grace of repentance, the better grace of pardon, he was not re-established in his original state. His relations with God, with himself, with Satan, with the world, were profoundly troubled ; the trial became complicated for him ; temptation performed a much more extensive part ; it began to be much bolder, more painful and perilous ; from being without, where it once was, it now penetrated within, and we are all reduced to this miserable state. All this is but too certain. But notwithstanding this, if these accidents which came so unexpectedly through the double sin of the angels and of man—if, I say, these accidents have modified the Divine plan, they have not

had the power to change it substantially. The will of God being, and continuing to be, the primary cause of all things, it invariably preserves therein the honour of its sovereignty ; its supreme empire, therefore, exercises over them an incomparably greater influence than all secondary causes united. Consequently, even to this day, with our struggles and our pains, our weaknesses and our sins, the life of man, if we look at it in the true light, remains a Divine trial much more than a temptation—a trial through which the wisest and the best of Fathers makes us pass for our good, much more than a combat to which an un pitying enemy in his malice subjects us.

In the light of these principles, which are both so sure and so consoling, we may henceforth consider with an eye more firm, and a heart less unquiet, this fact of temptation which happens to us all, since the fall of our first father—a most grievous fact, indeed, as we have just seen ; a complicated fact also, as I have shown, since it now manifests itself under three aspects, and becomes the united work of three distinct agents. These agents are, as you know, the devil, the world, and concupiscence. No child of Adam is impelled to any evil which is not connected with one of these three agents, as with its principle ; and more commonly, the three conspire together to seduce and allure us. We must then speak to you of each of these different temptations.

And first, of the devil : He naturally holds the chief place in our temptations. We speak of the devil, because there is a principal one, who is the chief of the rebel angels ; but the truth is, they are a multitude, and no one of us knows their number. We cannot, as Christians, doubt either their existence, or their state, or their action on

mankind. It is a catholic dogma, like the mystery of the adorable Trinity, or the Incarnation of the Word. The faith of many has fallen away on this point, and would to God that this was only true of Christians in the world ! There are times when Satan seems to aim at putting himself forward, in order that he may pass for God and be served as God. It is always his desire, his hope, and his want ; but as he is as destitute of noble feeling as he is full of pride, there are times also, and our own is one of them, when, in order the better to succeed, he keeps in the background, and appears to labour only to make men believe that he is nothing. It is the night that he needs, and if it is possible, complete night ; and as to believe that he exists, is to believe what is true, it is still a light in the soul. So long as this light fetters and clogs him, he does his best to quench it.

All evil, then, pleases him, and nothing pleases him but evil: it is a pleasure without joy, you understand ; for unhappy as he is, he has no joy, nor will he ever have any—true joy is too holy a thing. If evil could be personified, this spirit would personify it. He hates all that is true and all that is good, God and Jesus Christ, Mary and the Church ; he hates all that God loves, and all that may make God love ; everyone who pronounces His name, all that explains His perfections, transmits His light and His grace, everything that bears His image or any vestige of Him. He hates every creature ; but man above all, entirely on account of Jesus Christ ; and this is why the Scripture says, that “from the beginning he was a murderer” (St. John viii. 44). To kill is his grand passion—a spiritual passion—and such as we are not capable of either feeling or of conceiving. He is “a robber,” saith the Gospel, “who cometh not but to steal.

and to kill, and to destroy" (St. John x. 10). He is the Prince, and, as it were, the God of death: a living death—a death which is armed, militant, and conquering. To darken, to blight, to degrade, to deform, to disorganise, to disunite, is his insatiable desire and his constant effort. Moreover, nothing satisfies him; he will hunger to eternity. Hell, peopled with his victims, might furnish him, one would think, with a satisfying banquet, for his victims are his food; but far from satiating him, it only irritates his rage, and consequently, aggravates his torment. The devils differ from one another in rank, and are unequal in power; but all are in the same state of damnation, and have the same character—of rage, cruelty, and despair. Now, the hatred which they bear us, and the violent desire they have to snatch us from the Hands of God, shows itself by the war they make against us, and the temptations of all kinds with which they beset us. It is their stated occupation: whence it is that, to designate Satan, St. Paul says simply, "the tempter" (1 Thess. iii. 5). It is not from afar they do this; the air we breathe is full of them, and they cover the earth we tread. "For our wrestling," saith St. Paul, "is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ephes. vi. 12). It is probable there is one of them deputed by their master to tempt each of us, and who follows us, as it were, officially in all our ways, from our birth to our death, alas! and beyond it, if we do not die in the Lord. In acting thus, Satan is the ape of God, and he strives to oppose and contradict the action of our good angel, by making of it a parody and a mock imitation.

But we must not conclude from this, that there is never more than one evil spirit that tempts us. How often does it happen that, vanquished by our resistance, the devil that tempts us goes and fetches seven other devils more wicked than himself and comes back in their company to attack our soul ! (St. Matt. xii. 43). Jesus drove out of the heart of Magdalen no less than seven devils (St. Mark xvi. 9), and when the man met Him from "the country of the Gerasens," possessed with an unclean spirit, on Jesus asking the devil his name, he said to Him : "My name is Legion, for we are many" (St. Mark v. 9).

If we consider these wicked spirits in themselves, they are undoubtedly very formidable. The Scripture everywhere represents them under figures which are evidently chosen to inspire us with dread. It is a serpent which creeps and glides along on the ground, a venomous asp, a winged dragon, a hideous crocodile, a roaring lion going about seeking its prey, a monster "whose strength is in his loins ; he setteth up his tail like a cedar, his bones are like pipes of brass, his gristle like plates of iron ; he sleepeth under the shadow, in the covert of the reed, in moist places ; behold, he will drink up a river, and he trusteth that the Jordan may run into his mouth" (Job xl., xli.). Or he is likened to a sea-monster "who cannot be drawn out with a hook, nor his tongue tied with a cord" ; and again, to "a frightful beast, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten diadems" (Apoc. xiii. 1). Their natural intelligence is very great, and their power also ; they are acquainted with a thousand secrets that are unknown to us, and they exercise their sway over all the elements. Consequently they can unchain the winds, cause violent storms,

make the thunder roar and the lightning flash ; they can cause illusions which serve sometimes to seduce, sometimes to terrify : the history of Moses makes us believe this. They can render themselves visible and put on a thousand forms, as they did to tempt St. Anthony ; they can transform themselves, saith St. Paul, into angels of light (2 Cor. xi. 14), and what more ? We see in the life of St. Martin that they are not interdicted from putting on the resemblance of Christ.* Their movements are so rapid that in the twinkling of an eye they can pass over immense distances. We may believe that they are never weary : certainly they are never worn out, and generations after generations do not bring them weariness or old age. With them there is neither day nor night ; they are unacquainted with sleep—it would be useless to them. Here below, if we have a wicked man for an enemy, his presence is local, his action is necessarily limited ; there is always a trace of conscience left within him, and, at certain moments at least, he can blush, be moved, and come to a stop. Not so is it with the devil—he wishes evil implacably and always, and the greatest evil which is possible. He is a spirit without heart, without compassion, and incapable of pity. Nothing equals his audacity. Accessible to fear, he is not so to respect, except the action of the Divine arm, to which he submits as a galley-slave carries his chain. Nothing stops him—neither consecrated places nor the holiest occupations. There is no being more shameless, more impudent, more obscene.

You may imagine also that the experience of a universal war against mankind, which has lasted for six thousand years, adds assurance to the enterprises of the

* See the Life of St. Martin, by Sulpitius Severus, chap. 24.

demons and gives a chance to their success. You may suppose that they know our nature thoroughly. "The devil," says Father Faber, ingeniously, "has reduced the possibilities and the probabilities of our ruin to a science, which he applies with an unwearying energy, a superior intelligence, an almost irresistible power, and a variety of means, which might well fill us with fear."* The Catechism of the Council of Trent, always so grave and so exact, resumes the instruction of the Church and the sentiment of all the Saints when it says: "Without any doubt, if the help of God did not assist us in this struggle, no one of us would have sufficient strength against such enemies; and that, vanquished by Satan, we should become his slaves."† All this cannot be contested. It is necessary to know it, and useful to recall it to mind, in order that, in this war in which we are engaged, and on which nothing less than the salvation of our soul is at stake, we should first of all keep ourselves in humility, always distrusting our own strength and leaning upon God alone, in Whom and by Whom we shall be able to become strong and victorious in every contest, for these combats are of such a nature that the least leaven of pride causes us more loss and exposes us to greater dangers than all the united energies and all the rage and malice of hell could occasion us. But if on one side our danger is so great, we must tell you, on the other, that if, considered in himself, our adversary is so formidable, we may, and we ought in fact, to have no fear of him whatever.

* *Spiritual Progress*, vol. ii., c. 24.

† *Quotidiè nos Deo commendemus ejusque patriam curam et præsidium imploremus, minimè dubitantes fore ut si deseramur divino patrocínio, vaferrimi hostis laqueis irretiti teneamur.*—*Catech. Rom.*, pars iv., cap. 15.

The chiefs of the Israelites, sent by Moses to explore the promised land, did not lie when they said : " We have seen great giants of the race of Anak, and by their side we appeared as grasshoppers." But Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephoni, gave utterance to a higher and a more positive truth, when judging of things by the superior light of faith they encouraged their brethren by these words : " Fear ye not the people of this land, for we are able to eat them up as bread—all aid is gone from them. The Lord is with us : fear ye not " (Numbers xiii., xiv.). It is the same with us.

Without regarding the conditions, apart from which God has decreed that we should never be tempted, nor the weapons with which he has provided us for this warfare, it is sufficient for you to call to mind that the providence of God watches and rules over all ; and that this strength of the devils, however terrible we may suppose it to be when compared with our human weakness, has not before God the solidity of an atom : so that if he has not received from God the explicit permission, this colossus has not the power to move a single hair of your head. It is an absolute order, from which eternally he is not able to withdraw his obedience. To this order the devil remains wholly subject, even when, in the designs of His justice, Almighty God allows him more scope, so to speak, and employs him in those lower and meaner occupations which our sad sins often render necessary. Let him punish, or let him tempt, he is bound down in his acts ; and his malice, kept in a leash, by the Divine Goodness, serves only to accomplish the wishes of His love. Moreover, in every case, and without considering this Divine constraint, the devil can do nothing against us, except in a measure which is limited and fixed. He

has his nature, but we also have ours ; and, if since the fall, a part of our nature seems almost delivered up to him, there is another part to which, so long as we will it, he can never come near. The devil, in truth, can afflict our bodies, bring upon us real maladies, and disturb our organisation ; he can produce a great effect on our nervous system, on our temper, our senses, and on our lower appetites ; our imagination is a field he is free to cultivate, but so far as he is concerned, this is for him the extreme limit ; he cannot act directly on our intelligence, and still less, on our will.* If he gains anything here, we alone are the positive cause of it ; it is the fact of our abdication rather than of his conquest. He has persuaded us to come down, but he has not mounted to our level ; and, in short, he only puts his foot on those who have first thrown themselves on the ground. Besides, if he is able to guess what passes within us, he cannot however read our souls. The soul is a sanctuary which, without its own consent, God alone can enter.† It follows that even naturally, and notwithstanding the superiority of his intelligence, the devil is often deceived in our regard. Father Faber makes this consoling remark, and, to all who will reflect upon it, experience itself shows its truth.‡ How many times, for example, does the demon take a false view, choose a wrong moment, engages us to take a dose of evil that is either too strong or too weak, and in consequence how

* See on all this question of the natural power of the angels, St. Thom. I p., Quæst. cxi.

† *Interiorem conditionem hominis Deus solus novit, qui est spirituum moderator . . . Diabolus tentat explorando interiorem conditionem hominis.*—St. Thom. I pars. Quæst. cxiv. art 2.

‡ *Spiritual Progress*, vol. ii., c. 24.

often he plays an awkward game and is caught in his own snares. This is a certainty that may give us peace ; but we are entitled to this peace, on grounds which are higher and more sure.

Doubtless you have not forgotten what we said to you in our instruction on Faith, of that Holy of Holies in creation, which in Catholic language we call the supernatural. Now, even in its first state, which is earthly and elementary, which is the state of grace, this Holy of Holies, and still more, the natural sanctuary of free souls is divinely interdicted to Satan ; and not only Satan never enters it, but he would not be at all able to see thoroughly anything in it, and one may say he understands nothing about it. Certainly, he knows that the supernatural exists. Since the time he protested in Heaven against it, he has seen its long and triumphant history unfolded here below before his saddened sight ; and along the course of many centuries he has felt its effects, which have all been to him so many wounds. He believes in it, then, not with that filial faith which causes us to love and adore it, but with the faith of a slave which makes him tremble (St. James viii. 12). Nevertheless, he remains a stranger to this supernatural order, banished as he is for ever to that sphere of his preference and of his chastisement, which our Lord calls the "exterior darkness" (St. Matt. viii. 12). All this supernatural wisdom of God is to him impenetrable ; the elevation of those ways makes them unknown to him in his low condition. Their simplicity completely baffles his crooked and crafty spirit ; their humility confounds him, their purity blinds him ; there is more goodness, more longanimity, more love in them than he is capable of feeling or even of conceiving. I repeat it, he understands nothing about them. Intelli-

gent as he may be in other matters of a lower order, but in the supernatural order he is ignorant and foolish :* as are so many men, alas ! his imitators and his children, who, marvellously endowed in the natural order, are found greatly wanting in intelligence, and seem even stupid, when it is a question of Jesus Christ, of the Church, of grace ; in a word, of the supernatural order. You see, then, clearly from the Gospel, to what a degree the depth of the mystery of Jesus remained an enigma to the devil. Satan made Jesus his study all his life—he followed Him as closely as he could ; he tempted Him, both by himself and by means of others. Certainly, for a spirit so penetrating, and who only knew too well the design of the Incarnation, it would seem that it was easy to recognise Jesus as God living in the flesh ; especially as Satan was not ignorant of the Scriptures, and as the characters, the states, and all the striking facts of the human life of the Messiah are there mentioned beforehand, and are clearly made known. Notwithstanding this, he knew nothing clearly of the Incarnation, nor with any certainty. He was never able to reach beyond a suspicion of it, and never ceased to have his doubt ; thinking one moment that the Divinity dwelt truly in that Man, but not having the same opinion a moment after ; dazzled by His miracles, and still more by His virtues,

* It is doubtless in this sense that we must understand what St. Martin, so skilful in this science, said of the particular folly of the demon, whom they adored under the name of Jupiter. It is in other respects curious that this supreme god of the Pagans should have been precisely one of the most obtuse spirits of Satan's court. See the passage in Sulpitius Severus : "*Jam verò dæmones, prout ad eum quisque venisset, suis nominibus increpabat. Mercurium maximè patiebatur infensum ; Jovem brutum atque hebetem esse dicebat.*"—Dialog. ii., c. 13.

but always despairingly confounded by that poverty, that littleness, that sweetness, that facility of yielding, that love of silence, of obscurity, of opprobrium, that thirst for penance, that seeking for suffering, in a word, that ardent and constant devotion to the Cross, which seemed to him absolutely irreconcilable with the obstinate idea, which, in his pride, he entertained, of greatness, of power, and of sovereignty. In short, St. Paul affirms it; Satan did not know Christ, if he had known Him, "he would never have crucified the Lord of Glory."* You see then how blind he is.

Now, as the devil was blind with regard to Christ, so he is also in your regard, in the exact proportion in which you are formed in Christ, and Christ is formed in you. One who is baptised is infinitely more hidden from him than an infidel, a just man more than a sinner, a saint more than an ordinary just man. He does not know, he cannot know what God does in you, and still less what He wishes to do in you. He may, strictly speaking, have his conjectures on the subject; but, in reality, he walks

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.—It would not be right to quote, as opposed to the doctrine here laid down, the passages of Scripture, wherein the devil affirms that he knew who Jesus was, and calls Him "the Holy One of God," or even "the Son of God" (St. Matt. viii. 29, and especially St. Mark i. 24, and iii. 12). Besides, that the devil is a liar, and the father of lies, commentators and doctors agree in declaring that in these passages the wicked spirits put on a bold and shameless face, pleading the false in order to know the true; and that if, in consequence of the manifestations of Jesus in His public life, we concede to them a certain knowledge they had of Him, it is still quite evident that this knowledge was neither full, nor clear, nor sure, in their intelligence. Consult on the passages quoted above, the commentary of Cornelius à Lapide, acknowledged to be a good theologian, and a learned commentator, and who faithfully gives the opinions of the ancients.

at random, he combats by the help of lights, which are to him, but real darkness; and assaulting the rampart, he takes no account of the other means of defence which are at the disposal of the city he wishes to take.

Had we only this guarantee—and you see, and will see, still more clearly, we have other guarantees—it would be already manifest, as we said, following the holy doctors, that our enemy, though in himself so formidable, and able so greatly to torment us, is, in fact, powerless, to injure us, and that in consequence, he is much more to be despised than feared.*

Let us come to the second source of temptation, which is the world. What do we mean by the world, in regard to the help it furnishes to our first tempter, the devil? It is not assuredly this visible universe, of which St. John writes, in recounting the glories of the Word, that “the world was made by Him” (St. John i. 10). In itself, nothing is more innocent. It is not enough to say, all is good in this world which the Word has made; all in it is ordained for good, and, therefore, is doing good; all in it interprets the thoughts of God, and all in it serves as a token of His love.

Neither by “the world” are we to understand human society taken in itself. This society comes from God; it is His work, His Image, and His proxy, the organ of His Paternity, the instrument of His Providence. It is,

* *Ligatus est à Domino tanquàm passer ut illudatur à nobis. Positi autem sunt cum ipso socii dæmones, quasi scorpiones et serpentes ut conculcentur à nobis Christianis. . . . Quare nec eâ illi ratione sunt extimescendi: vana quippe per gratiam Christi sunt eorum molimina. . . . Neque timendi sunt etiam si invadere videantur, etiam si minitentur mortem: imbecilli namque cum sint, comminari solùm possunt et nihil prætereà.—Verba St. Antonii ap. St. Athanasium, Vita St. Anton., Nos. 24 et 26.*

of it, that God forms His Church, that which is on earth first, then that which is in Heaven. It is truly the world, but it is the world which "God so loved as to give for it His only begotten Son" (St. John iii. 16). What is then, once more, this world, which tempts us? It is the multitude, unhappily countless, of those who going astray in their love, have fully fixed on this earth their heart and their hope; who, having no relish for heaven, or even not believing that there is one, are resolved with their whole will, to demand only of earth and of the present life, all the happiness they need (Ps. xvi. 11). This multitude, this society, this race (for it is a race, and which, from its commencement, will perpetuate itself unto the end), is, what the Scripture calls *the world*, and of which it says, it "is seated in wickedness" (1 St. John v. 19), so that to love it, is to cease to love God (1 St. John ii. 15, St. James iv. 4). It is the world which has not known God (St. John i. 10), and for which Jesus would not pray (St. John xvii. 9), out of which He chooses all those whom He saves (St. John xv. 19), and against which, in fine, He came to contend, and which He declared that He had overcome (St. John xvi. 33). This is the world that tempts us. The soul of this unhappy and cursed society, the principle of its movements, the centre of its energies, the law which rules all its acts, the Holy Spirit has told us by St. John, is the triple concupiscence: that of the flesh, that is to say, luxury; that of the eyes, that is to say, vain curiosity, ostentation, and all kinds of avarice; and finally, the pride of life (St. John ii. 16). Under the leadership and direction of Satan, who is the prince of this world and its father, this society everywhere spread abroad, everywhere active, mixing itself up with everything, becomes here below a

frightful power of temptation, of perversion, and of ruin. It is the grand resource of the devil, his arsenal, his army, and the chief means of his victories. It lends him eyes to see, lips to speak, and also to smile, hands to work, to write, and to caress ; it places him in our highways, seats him at our hearths, and delivers over to him all that touches us, and can influence our life. One word expresses all, it *humanises* him. As the Church is, as it were, the continual incarnation of Jesus, His mystical Body extended in place and in time ; so the world is, as it were, the incarnation of Satan, and truly the church of the devil. All that the Holy Church of Christ is and does upon earth in the order of sanctification and salvation, the world is, and does, in the order of seduction, and of the eternal loss of souls. Follow step by step, in their opposite ways, these two contradictory Churches, that from on high, and that from below ; you will see that the latter is but the perverse and detestable counterfeit of the former. The Church has its principles, its dogmas, its laws, its sacraments, its temples, its festivals, its hierarchy, its apostles, its doctors, its saints ; the world has its maxims, its sophisms, its prejudices, its tyrannical obligations, its consecrated and efficacious signs, among which gold holds the first rank ; it has its places of pleasure, its assemblies, its vain and its impure festivals ; it has its sages, its learned men, its artists, its poets, its great men ; it has its princes, it has its emissaries, who, under a thousand forms, and by a thousand means, serve its cause, augment its credit, and finally spread far and wide its wicked and deadly influence. The Church has its grace, and its promises ; the world has its charm, and its lures. The Church enlightens every creature with a higher and a divine light ; there is not

one on which it does not cause men to read inscribed the Name of God, and from which it does not receive as an additional motive for loving God, an invitation to bless Him and to serve Him more perfectly. The world casts its dark shadow on all around it, or, which is still worse, throws over all a false light, which makes us misapprehend both the greatness of the objects before us, their proper value, and the relations they bear in our regard. At the same time, it conceals with care, all that is divine ; but whatever may hide God from us, or make us forget Him, or may suggest to a mind such as ours, a difficulty, a doubt, a distrust, and consequently a coldness and estrangement of heart ; this he brings prominently forward, and wearies us with its contemplation. What the Church makes use of as a stepping-stone to mount upwards, the world uses as a stumbling-block to make us fall. It turns against love all the gifts of love, and makes of the creation a vast conspiracy armed against the Creator. Spreading everywhere on earth lies, illusions, fascination, it sows in it apostasy, and thus employs what is good, to the profit of what is evil, life to the profit of death, the entire universe to the profit of hell. In short, the Church is but one immense and universal system of Divine edification ; the world one immense and universal system of scandal. It is in this that its proper malice and its specific character consists ; and it is why Jesus has said, "Woe to the world because of scandals" (St. Matt. xviii. 17).

You see, then, the nature of this second enemy of ours, the world, what are its works, its ways of action, and how it tempts. It is bright, it is insinuating, it flatters. If it is resisted, and, thank God, there are always some who resist it, it commences to jest and to

joke—another form of temptation which is more to be feared than its first attack. How many, in fact, give way before this temptation, whom all other temptations had not even shaken ! But if, in its raillery it does not succeed, then it persecutes, always with skill, often with violence. Supposing that its own spirit does not urge it to such lengths, which is more than questionable, Satan, its master, knows well how to constrain it, and the merciful justice of God also mingles itself with it. For, besides, to allow this fine talker, this wise, this moderate, this rabid, preacher of liberty, this false friend of mankind, to allow the world, I say, to come to this excess of despotic action, and to the base cowardice not only of employing force, but of becoming itself an executioner, is to deliver it up to a dishonour, which is evidently a chastisement ; it is further, to unmask it, to discover its hidden designs, and hence to multiply, for all the souls it deceives, the chances of recognising it, of despising it, and of escaping from its tyranny.

Thus, you see then, what* the world can do ; it can seduce, and menace, and hold up before our eyes a mirror of vain or of insignificant pleasures, of false or of worthless joys, such as are often shameful, always transitory ; it can greatly frighten our imagination, or torment our senses, by the prospect, or the reality of evils which can affect only the body, and which also quickly pass away ; all this is what the world can do, and Satan, by means of the world.* Their power goes no further, but to

* *Duplicem aciem producit mundus contra milites Christi : blanditur enim ut decipiat ; terret ut frangat. Non nos teneat voluptas propria ; non nos terreat crudelitas aliena, et victus est mundus. Ad utrosque aditus occurrit Christus et non vincitur Christianus.*—St. August. de St. Vincent. Sermo.

this point it can go ; and on this point, therefore, how can we deny, that the outcome of all this in our human life, is a grave complication, and a serious danger to our soul.

Finally, as in this work of temptation, the world is the mainstay of Satan ; the great strength of the world is that concupiscence, of which we have said, that it is its whole soul : concupiscence—that is to say, that irregular inclination which, since Adam's sin, lies buried in every soul of man and inclines it to act contrary to order, to reason, and to the law of God. There is seated man's third temptation. "In fact," says St. James, "let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God ; for God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man ; but every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured" (St. James i. 13). When we sow plentifully a bad seed, what will come of it if there is a defect also in the soil ? When you put wood on the hearth and blow upon it ever so much, if there is no fire on the hearth, how can the wood burn ? So, in our actual state, whatever might be the enterprises of the world or of hell against us, if there were nothing in us they could work upon, and we felt no sympathy in their work, would not their trouble be for the most part in vain ? But, we must repeat it, we have all the shame of carrying within us this unhappy sympathy ; and even when God lives in us by His grace, and when we love Him above all things, we continue, nevertheless, in some measure attached to the world, and connive at the temptations of Satan. Once more in this lies a third power against us.

Adam did not know this evil before he fell ; nor did the new Adam ever know it. Tempted from without

and in many ways (Heb. iv. 15), Jesus was never tempted from within. His state as the Man-God rendered this impossible ; and His all powerful grace completely exempted His Mother also. But apart from Him and from her, no one born of woman has been excluded from this ignominy—not even those who have been sanctified in their mother's womb, or in the course of their life have been confirmed in grace.

However real this evil is that exists within us, we must confess that it does not exist in all in the same degree. Oh ! how true it is that “the generation of the just is blessed” (Psalm cxi. 2) ; and what a grace, what a progress, what a foundation for sanctity, is a holy birth ! In consequence of the great and adorable law which causes the natural unity of the human family, every man coming into the world bears within him not only all the organic consequences of the virtues, but also those of the sins of the race ; they are, as it were, added on, and he is himself the total of that sum. Who, in fact, does not comprehend—who does not see with his own eyes, to what a degree souls affect bodies ; and who does not feel in himself, to what a degree also the body influences the soul ? This does not, doubtless, have the effect of sanctifying at once, and still less saving infallibly those who are born of a holy family—nor are they enchained to evil and lost without hope who are the offspring of families that are ungodly. All that is fatal in most cases remains in the lower regions of our being, and the moral liberty of each is unaffected by it. If it happens that it is no longer so, as in the case of insanity or any other analogous maladies, which too often come from family causes, nothing in this case is imputed or imputable. What is written in the Holy

Scripture, and is, besides, a striking fact in history, that God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation (Exod. xx. 5), should be understood of temporal evils, which, far from injuring the soul, so often become an occasion of commendation and of profit. In fact, everyone is his own master; and no one will be judged, recompensed, or punished, but according to his own works. But when we have said this, we ask, what place must be occupied by those possible alleviations or aggravations arising from original concupiscence? and what is the influence exercised over our lives by the different conditions in which we are born, or in consequence of what our ancestors have been as regards morality? Certainly, many amongst us will rise up in the last day to bless their father and their mother: how many also will rise up to curse them!

It always happens that, being more or less predisposed to evil, we are all born inclined to it. Though it comes from evil, and though it has the power to lead us to commit, yet this inclination in itself is not sin—such is the formal instruction of the Catholic Church. We cannot deny, however, that it is a stain and the living mark of our degradation. Now, I have told you, it is this same inclination to evil, which, giving the devil or the world a hold upon us, exposes us to a thousand temptations, and ends in making our life a painful and a perilous struggle.

I gave you, just now, this precious assurance, that Satan does not know your interior, and that the grace you have there, remains entirely hidden from him. Alas! it is otherwise with that part of you which is the seat of concupiscence; the demon finds himself here in a coun-

try he knows, and we may say that here he is at home. As the owl begins to see as soon as it is twilight, so it is with Satan, as soon as there is darkness. It follows that these shades of our concupiscences, though lessened by our virtues, are for him a familiar region—they are like avenues which are outside the enclosure of our liberty; but which, being open to the devil, always allow him to advance, even to our gates. These gates are closed to him, doubtless, so long as we are in the state of grace and are faithful to grace; but he never loses the hope of inducing us to open them again. You understand from this how easy it is for him to know our weak points, and to tempt us on the side of our tastes, of our passions, of our habits, and of our character. These are his ordinary tactics; and you may judge also to what a degree this weakness of ours makes our relations with the world delicate, laborious, and difficult; for, of themselves, and incessantly, our concupiscences urge us to the love, to the pursuit, and to the passionate and avaricious possession of all those pleasures and of that happiness which the world sets before us, exaggerating, at the same time, their value and their charm, and pressing us to enjoy them.

Such, then, is the nature, the history, and the actual reality of this evil of temptation, from which we ask of God every day in the Lord's Prayer; first, to keep us, and afterwards to deliver us, from this evil which God did not create, which God in the beginning did not wish for any of His creatures, which He did not permit, but for the wisest reasons, in view of an incomparable blessing which He had the power and the will to derive from it for us all, and which He does actually draw from it, for all those among us who listen to Him, believe

in Him, obey Him, and confide in Him. It is, truly, justice rendered easy—what we have said would be a sufficient proof of this—but when we have explained to you the conditions in which this fact happens, and without which it cannot happen, you will see this truth set before you in the clearest light.

II.

The first condition on which God permits temptation is, that it should only attack beings that are free, and whose responsibility therefore ceases at the same moment as their liberty. Whatever may be, in fact, its cause, its nature, or its degree, temptation can only injure us, if we consent to it, and this consent we are always able to give or not to give. “See,” saith St. Bernard, “the weakness of our enemy, who only conquers those who wish to be conquered. He has certainly the power to tempt you : but you are always able, at your will, either to give or to refuse that consent which he solicits, and without which he gains nothing.”* Our will, we have already said, may be influenced, but it cannot be forced, unless it yields of its own accord. We know this truth, but we have always need of learning it again, and consequently it is the duty of those who instruct others to repeat it. Many persons who believe it in theory, yet forget it in practice. The notion of their interior inviolability is easily veiled under the clouds with which temptation envelopes it ; hence arises a trouble, a distrust,

* Videte quàm debilis est hostis noster qui non vincit nisi volentem. Potest inimicus excitare tentationis motum ; sed in te est an velis dare vel negare consensum ; in tuâ facultate est, si volueris, inimicum tuum facere servum tuum, ut omnia tua cooperentur in bonum. —S. Bernard, Sermo, v., in Quadrages.

and, too often, a fear, which is wont to weaken them, and which proportionately strengthens their adversary.

Doubtless, to be culpable in this matter, it is not at all necessary to do, to will, or even to desire formally the evil which is suggested to them by the tempter. If we go as far as that, the fall is complete. We are sinners, at least. To be sullied by sin, it is enough, to take pleasure with advertance, and, in spite of conscience, in the thought of the evil which is suggested. But still it is necessary that the will should intervene. If the will remains entirely a stranger to the evil suggested; if the mere passing thought, or even the feeling that naturally followed it, was only a surprise, an act stolen by the force of the assault, a movement which is passive, and, like a sudden blow, to which we may add the shock and the stupor—which a violent blow always produces—there would not be in this evil suggestion even the shadow of a fault.* If there is a fault, it is that, notwithstanding the light which illumined the mind, and the warning given by the conscience, the will allowed itself to be gained over, and freely performed an act which it felt was to be forbidden. This will was, then, its own mistress; its resistance was possible, and therefore it was divinely commanded.

This first attention of the mind to the object which tempts us, this complacent repose which the heart takes in it instinctively, are, in some respects, more difficult to avoid than the explicit consent to more evil suggestions. Precisely because the insinuations that bring on these

* *Mentem nequaquam cogitatio immunda inquinat cùm pulsatur, sed cùm hanc sibi per delectationem subjugat.*—S. Greg. Magnus, *Moral.*, lib. xxi., cap. 3.—St. Francis of Sales treats admirably this matter in the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, part iv., chap. 3, &c.

weaknesses are less gross and less daring, they excite in us less repugnance, and sometimes scarcely awaken in us any distrust. We shall not be, they say, so culpable ; are we sure that we shall be culpable at all ? Besides pretexts are never wanting for looking at what strikes and attracts us. Our covetousness suggests them ; whether it be the covetousness which makes us curious, or that which urges us to be rash ; human wisdom supplies them, sometimes also conscience ; for example, when it disposes the soul which is not well instructed, or feeble, or scrupulous, to excessive fears, to scrupulous self-examinations, or to too frequent reflections on its conduct. In other respects, however, it is much easier to repel the first attempt of the enemy than his more strenuous attacks ; for then, temptation ordinarily reaches only the inferior part of our soul, and it only reaches it timidly ; and further, it remains almost entirely exterior, and hence it leaves us, if not always in a perfect calm, at least in full possession of ourselves. In every case, of so great importance is the attitude we take in these first moments, that, if resistance should cost us an energetic effort, or even a painful violence, we ought to resolve to make it, and never to be wanting in this duty ; in fact, do not forget that what we have just said of our moral inviolability, and of the sovereignty of our free will, becomes more or less true according as we give way to or resist more or less this hostile power, which is jealous of our free will, and aims at its destruction. Our empire over ourselves belongs to us practically on the condition of our preserving it, and consequently of defending it ; and in the exact measure in which we abandon it, we shall inevitably lose it ; but if, on the contrary, we keep ourselves “ in the truth which frees us ” (St. John viii. 32), in the justice which

keeps us standing, looking up on high, where are the things that are durable, near to God, the Source of all dignity, of all authority, of all strength, then we carry "our soul in our hands," as the Royal Prophet says (Ps. cxviii. 109); and no power in the world is able to deprive us of it.

Do not be troubled, then, and especially do not be alarmed, if a temptation should be long and obstinate; but, rather, taking it as a good sign, say with the Psalmist: "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear, if a battle should rise up against me; in this will I be confident" (Ps. xxvi. 3, 4); and then, more certain than ever of victory, be more intrepid than ever in the combat. For, what does this desperate rage prove, but that your adversary has gained nothing as yet? We do not besiege a city when it is taken; a defeat puts an end to the struggle, and there is peace for the conquered—a peace that is shameful, the peace of a slave, but which outwardly is still a peace. It is only on the side of God that there is no peace for the wicked (Isai. xlviii. 22); on the side of the temptation, it is of faith that they are in peace. "When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth" (St. Luke xi. 21), saith Jesus. If, then, you are at war, rejoice and give thanks; and were this war to continue always, and to become furious, and cost you your life—which very rarely happens—prefer it a thousand times to that cowardly and detestable peace.

This dominion we have over our moral actions is, then, our first security. It has its value. Nevertheless, if there were not other securities besides, I would not have dared to boast, I confess, as I have done, of the conditions on which we undergo these struggles; for always being

able to resist, in fact, we do not resist either always or often. You know the doctrine of the Council of Trent on venial sin. It declares that "however just and holy the children of God are here below, all fall, however, sometimes, if not into grave faults, at least into those lesser and daily failings, which are called venial sins ; so much so that without a special privilege, such as it pleased God to grant to the Blessed Virgin, it is impossible for man to avoid them altogether."* Now, all sin comes from a temptation, as it is written : "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured ; then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (St. James i. 14, 15).

But the truth is, that we are not alone in this warfare, nor are we the only ones attacked, nor the only ones to defend ourselves ; and it is this fact, above all others, which renders our triumph easy, and ensures it without fail to everyone of good will.

First, it is a very important consideration, that it is not we alone whom the enemy attacks, for this supreme reason : that it is not we alone whom he hates. There are others ; I repeat it, it is not we alone, whom he hates and persecutes, it is Jesus Christ in us. Were it not for the prodigious designs of God on mankind, and the infinite love He bears us, and the unspeakable honour that He renders us, by being born among us, and constituting Himself our Head for all eternity, we might of ourselves, being such as we are, inspire Satan with contempt ; we can hardly see on what ground we should inspire him with hatred. But we are the images of God, His likenesses, the true children of the Father, the brethren and co-heirs of the Son, the Temples of the Holy Spirit : we are

* Trident Sess. vi., cap. 11 et canon 23.

the holy nation, "the royal priesthood" (1 St. Peter ii. 9), "the living Body of Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 27); by giving to God our love, which should be easy to one who receives so much from Him, we can give Him joy and glory—this is what lights up in this wicked spirit this triple and inextinguishable fire of jealousy, of hatred, and of anger, which is the furnace whence issue forth all those fiery darts that he hurls at us. We have seen in every age the heretics, and in our time the revolutionists, under the dominion of a veritable frenzy, profane sacred things, destroy holy images, and break crucifixes in pieces. That which makes Satan urge them to so great a fury, impels him also to corrupt and to maltreat us; and even more so, for we are more expressive images of God, and especially more beloved, than these images of wood or of stone. And it is the same with the world as with the devil; "for, if the world hates you," said Jesus (and all worldly people hate you), "it was Me that it hated before it hated you" (St. John xv. 18). What is the history of all the martyrs and saints, if not the proof of this divine saying, and its commentary?

Certainly there is something in this of which to be proud. "If you be reproached for the Name of Christ," says St. Peter, "you shall be blessed; for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is His Spirit, resteth upon you" (1 St. Peter iv. 14). The Apostle in this passage, doubtless, enumerates the fruits of temptation surmounted; but because all these Divine blessings are already in us by grace, and if we do not possess them to-day, we may have them to-morrow, and live only to enjoy them; therefore they are also, and first of all, the reason for which Satan persecutes us.

But if this is an honour for us, is it not also a motive of encouragement. For if, thanks to Jesus Christ, there is between mankind and God, such a perfect bond; if the head feels all that happens to the members of the body; if it is always the head that is aimed at, will not God interest Himself in a cause which becomes His cause? It is not even necessary for Him to love us—it is enough that He loves Himself, and has at heart the honour of His Name. Therefore, He declares in several places in the Scripture, that as it is He that is attacked in us, we shall find Him in us to defend Himself—"for My own sake, for My own sake will I do it, that I may not be blasphemed for My Name's sake. I will remove my wrath far off for My praise: I will bridle thee, lest thou shouldst perish" (Isai. xlviii. 9, 11). You will allow, that to be thus engaged in the personal honour of God, is to be sheltered in an impregnable citadel; and that if, living amid such brightness and furnished with such promises, we had a corresponding faith, we should never be overcome, nor troubled, nor disturbed.

It is, then, for His own sake, first of all, that God interposes in our struggles; but it is for ourselves also, and because of the infinite love He bears us. Satan cannot attack any man, were he the last of all, but he finds God standing by his side, and in arms to defend him. The arm of God is his action, and His action is His Providence: a Providence of preservation, a Providence of assistance, a Providence of co-operation: three aspects, three energies, three benefits, of one only and sovereign action; three treasures all exposed, three inexhaustible sources of a watchful Paternity, of a devoted love, of marvellous wisdom, and of irresistible power.

We have said, a Providence of preservation. St,

Augustine thanked God for all the sins he had not committed ; too enlightened not to see, that of himself, he might have committed them, and that without a special Providence, he naturally would have committed them. There is no person in the world who does not owe to God this kind of thanksgiving—one of the sweetest that we can make ; but in reality one of the rarest thanksgivings that we think of offering to God. Supposing that the chief and striking circumstances of your life had been different, and that you had not been so preserved as you have been, from the commission of evil, what would you not have become, being what you are, and what would have become of you ? You cannot reflect on this without confusion ; you cannot calculate it without trembling ; you cannot especially compare the life which you might have led on this probable supposition, with the actual history of your earthly existence, without being penetrated with an immense gratitude towards God. “ Unless the Lord had been my helper,” exclaimed the Psalmist, “ my soul had almost dwelt in hell ” (Psalm xciii. 17). It is the testimony and the cry of the whole human race.

What loving forethought, for example, and what preservation, in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism which, without your meriting it or asking for it, comes so spontaneously to withdraw you, from your very birth, from the empire of darkness, and “ to translate you,” says St. Paul, “ into the kingdom of the Son of His love ” (Coloss. i. 13). Perhaps your parents were not Christians—at least, in heart and in conduct ; perhaps they presented you at the font only to obey a custom too general for them to venture to dispense with : it matters not. These shadows which surrounded you did not

hinder the light from descending upon you, and, although held by hands that were cold, if not defiled, you received into you the spirit of sanctity and of love. The priest marked you with the sacred sign of the Cross, commanding the unclean spirit to go forth from your soul, and never to enter it again.* It was not only a grace, it was all grace in its principle; it was in God a door opened to the outpourings of His life; it was in you, with the right of receiving all, the capacity of containing all. What advantage in the way of good; but also, and first of all, what a rampart against evil! Had you been deprived of your baptism at your birth; had you, instead of being born in a Catholic country, been born, as is the case with so many, among infidels or among heretics, whose baptism may, indeed, be valid; but with whom it is like a plant uprooted from its proper soil and removed to a different climate, deprived of all regular culture, and therefore, in constant danger of sterility and death: if this had happened to you, what would have been the result, and where would you be at the present moment?

And your vocation to the Religious life! Certainly, on the ever-blessed day of your holy profession, you had a right to sing: "Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are delivered" (Ps. cxliii. 7). See what you were then, and also what you are since, and say what, without this preservation, far from this sure shelter, from these good examples, from this wise direction, and from this constantly sanctifying influence—say, what you would have done in the world, and what would be your state to-day before God?

* Rituale Rom. de Sacrament. Bapt.

In truth, it is quite a world in itself, this combination of Divine actions and of Divine arrangements, by which you have been continually defended without knowing it, without willing it, and often in spite of your will. Put back or advance but one year the date of your birth, change ever so little the circumstances and events of your early life ; take away from your life that occurrence, that word to which you listened, that book you read, that narrative, that friendship, or still more, that forced separation, or that disappointment of your heart—take away that trial, that sickness, I will venture to say, that fault, which the mercy of God, to benefit your soul, turned into a treasure of salutary humiliation, of holy terror, and of generous amendment,—where would be your piety, your virtue, your faith, your innocence, and perhaps, your honour? How many times you would have been ready for the fowler—but the fowler did not come ; and when he did come, it was you that were not ready. O secret of hours and of times ! O wonderful coincidences ! O prodigy of relations, which bind the least events of our lives with the salvation of our souls ! O Divine goodness, concealing itself in those thousand nothings of which our days are full, as the life of flowers and herbs in the drops of dew ! O earnest, able, ingenious Providence !

Nothing is so touching as to follow closely a young mother in the last weeks which precede her delivery. She contemplates in spirit that infant which is about to be born : she sees it in her arms, under her eyes, in her heart. She has a thousand dreams on the subject of her thoughts ; she forms plans, invents occurrences, and devises projects of all kinds. She prepares with care, and God knows with what delight, the cradle in which

it will sleep, the linen in which it will be swathed, the clothing which must cover it. She engages attendants for it, and gives lessons in advance to her domestics. She adorns with precious objects the chamber where it will see the day ; she ornaments it with flowers, and with all she can imagine to be most charming ; as if this infant was to be born possessed with reason and could appreciate these things. If she had the power of God, she would use it as He did, to transform into an earthly paradise, the humble dwelling where this dear one will dwell. At least, all will be ready when it comes ; all will be arranged there, to welcome it, to smile upon it, and make high festival for it ; so that when it opens its lips for the first time they will inhale an air impregnated with tenderness, and even before it has seen the light, it will have been enabled to feel the sentiment of love.

In this we have only an imperfect image of that sweet and more than maternal Providence of the good God, Who, from all eternity, employs His perfections in making preparations for our humble existence ; Who marks out its origin, its direction, its end ; Who arranges the place of our birth, and its circumstances, and this, even to the minutest details ; calculating all, regulating all, blessing all ; bestowing His grace most plentifully, dispensing joy in full measure, where it is not hurtful ; and not leaving, so far as He is concerned, any place for sorrow and temptation, except so far as our moral formation and our supernatural sanctification demand it, that is to say, when His all-wise goodness, and our own felicity do not call for it. The ancients imagined that we are born under the influence of some star, and that its influence decides irrevocably the destiny of every individual. The truth is, that we are born under the sovereign empire of that

living sun, we call Providence, and that in consequence we undergo this sweet fatality of being, in advance, and ineffably, loved. * We shall only know in Heaven, what we owe to this preservative action of our adorable Creator ; and the sudden intuition which the light of glory will give us of the prodigious secrets of this Heavenly mechanism, will not cast us into nearly such ravishing transports, as the revelation of those innumerable springs which God set a-going incessantly around us, to protect us against evil and to enable us to escape the dangers of the world.

As to the Providence which assists us, its effects are generally less hidden. Certainly, we do not know them all. By their number, which is, so to speak, infinite, by their value, which we cannot calculate, but especially by the treasures of love which the least of God's favours supposes and contains, these succours from on high exceed our thoughts. But it is enough to consider those which are manifest. "There are many more with us than there are against us," said Elias to his servant, terrified to see an entire army in pursuit of his solitary master ; "look, and you will no longer fear." And the prayer of the Saint enlightening the eyes of his disciple, he suddenly saw the mountain where they were, covered with the angelic hosts, and with chariots of fire (4 Kings vi. 15—17). All Christians live thus, surrounded invisibly but really. The entire Host of Heaven is at their service. God devotes them to it, and employs them in it.

First of all, we have Jesus Christ. There is nothing which, being a Divine gift, is a more precious treasure, and a more secure possession. We have Jesus for all things, and all happiness is in Him. But in the matter of temptation, what a protection He is to us, what help,

what defence, what unconquerable strength ! “We dwell in a strong city,” chanted the Jews of old, “a Saviour,” that is to say, Jesus, “a wall and a bulwark shall be set therein” (Isaias xxvi. 1). As in Him all is sanctity, truth, beauty, light, goodness, love, and grace ; so all in Him, is opposition to evil, war waged with hell, an army set in array against sin—in a word, victory over the world, and over the prince of the world. From the crib where He was born, to the Cross on which He died : from the womb of His mother in which He commenced to immolate Himself, to the Bosom of His Father where He is in triumph, He is for us the principle of resistance to evil, and consequently to temptation ; the principle which is living, active, infallible, and inexhaustible. He is so by all His mysteries and all His states ; He is so by His example, living with a Divine sincerity, the life which we lead ourselves, but everywhere causing light to shine by chasing away darkness on all sides. He is so by His instructions which contain all truth, and a doctrine absolutely holy : full of attractions for whatever is upright and elevated within us, and at the same time capable, thanks to the terrible penalties with which the mercy of God has fortified Him, of removing by fear, that part of us which resists the attraction, because it is less noble, and less pure. He is so also, by His formal promises, by His many pledges, which give us the hope and even now the foretaste of such blessings, that, in comparison, those of earth appear to us only dust and dirt. And what shall we say of those trials and temptations He deigned to undergo ; like a captain so devoted to his soldiers, that he cannot endure to see them engaged in conflicts, into which he is not the first himself to enter. Certainly, His Divine knowledge prevented Him from being

ignorant of anything: He willed, however, to join experience to His Divine knowledge, in order, writes St. Paul, to teach us at His own expense, what it costs fallen man to resist evil, and to become a Saint, as also to show us the compassionate indulgence to which our wretched condition lays claim (Heb. v. 8, and iv. 15). Finally, you know, by His Passion, which crowned His life, and by His Sacrifice, which consummated His work, at the same time that He accomplished the defeat of Satan and ruined the empire of sin, He showed us how to overcome the one, and how to escape the other, and moreover, merited for us the grace of success in this double enterprise. And all this still continues—I mean, this holy life, and also this holy death, or, at least, its virtue and power; all this enters into eternity, and works there for our advantage, incessantly; for Christ lives always, says the Apostle; and the way in which He henceforth employs His life, is to intercede for man: that is, to make His Blood, shed for their salvation, speak in their favour, and to present Himself to His Father as their Advocate, their Victim, and their claim for mercy (Heb. vii. 25). “He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High,” saith David, “shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob” (Ps. xc. 1). This succour of the Most High, this sublime assistance, in which the action of Providence seems all concentrated, is Jesus. We are under His protection since our baptism, and even before this, by our predestination. Since the beginning of the world, all men can and ought to come to it, all men can and ought to remain in it. Now, whoever has fled, in fact, to this protection, whoever enters into it by faith, keeps himself in it by hope, and dwells in it by charity, tell me, not only what temptation can be insurmountable, or even terrifying, but

what trial, however great it may be, can be found too heavy for him to bear ?

But God seems to find that even this is not enough ! Our Jesus expands Himself, like a flower ; this singular assistance becomes more universal ; this succour varies and multiplies itself without limit, so much does God wish, as it were, to overwhelm us with proofs of His solicitude, and to subject us, almost by force, to that perfect love which gives entire peace, by banishing all fear (1 St. John iv. 18). The Heart of Jesus passes into Mary and His own power with His Heart. She also enters the lists, and is engaged in all our combats. She has many grounds and titles for this interference ; her title of Mother of God, with her insatiable passion for the glory of Him whom she has the right to call her Son ; her title of the Spouse of Christ, associated to His work, and sharing all His labours ; her title of Mother of men, so that all which regards them moves her to the quick, and presses her to succour them ; her title of Immaculate, which, inspiring her first with an untold horror for all that is sin, then constitutes her, so to speak, the personal enemy of Satan, and proclaims the command she has received to crush his head ; finally, her title of Queen of angels, whence it comes that she not only commands them to aid us, but that in this, as in all things, she feels bound to set them an example. Therefore it is of her, and justly on this account, that it is written, and of her alone, “she is terrible as an army set in array” (Cant. vi. 3). Meditate on these doctrines, enter successively, under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, into each of these paths, to which I have only shown you, in passing, the approach and the way ; follow them unto their end, and you will see that, viewed only in her

relations with our temptations, the dogma alone of the most holy Virgin would be sufficient to place us, on this point, in an inviolable security.

Join to it, however, the doctrine concerning the good angels, recalling to mind that none of us comes into the world without God confiding him to the particular guardianship of one of these good and kind spirits, "who see always the face of the Father" (St. Matt. xxviii. 10); and that, further, the angels of all the hierarchies interest themselves in our salvation, and labour for it, with as much efficacy as zeal, which is the same thing as saying that, before all things, they defend us against our enemies (Heb. i. 14). They know the demons of old; they know beforehand their hateful designs, and their miserable tricks, and their utter weakness. They still hold in their hands the sword with which they have defeated them, but so completely defeated, that "there was no place found for them," saith St. John, "any more in heaven" (Apoc. xii. 8). There is room for thinking that the power of one good angel surpasses that of all the devils together. Your angel, then, is equal to his task; but if the interests of God in you should render it expedient, believe that more than twelve legions would come from on high to succour you (St. Matt. xxvi. 53). All these, I mean all the celestial court, with our brethren already glorified, who, to protect us, unite with the angels; all this makes a part of the regular Divine assistance, and of the providential order in which we all are placed.

And the Church on earth, daughter, sister, organ, rival of the Church in heaven! The Church with its hierarchy, its supreme pontificate, immortal, infallible, its episcopate everywhere present, its countless priests, its perpetual and universal apostolate! The Church with its sacrifice,

the power of which is without limit, and the oblation of which never ceases ; with its sacrifice of praise chanted night and day by so many consecrated lips and virginal voices ; with its liturgy, too, of which the Holy Spirit is the soul, and which, from all the corners of the earth, cries in every language and at every instant, "O God ! come to our aid ; O God ! make haste to help us ! Our Father, who art in heaven, lead us not into temptation !" Join to these the sacraments, which, embracing the whole life, and providing for all our needs, meet all the perils which menace us ; baptism, which snatches from Satan each human soul, which he would make his prey ; penance, which chases him with shame from those whom he has re-entered by surprise ; confirmation, instituted expressly to render us strong and valiant against him ; the Eucharist especially, which is Jesus Himself, the entire mystery of Jesus, abyss of redemption, ocean of sanctity, the substance of the truth, the fulness of love, the absolute contradiction of lies and of evil, and the infinite power to withdraw us from it ; Jesus, in a word, I repeat it, Jesus given, given to us, given each day, and to each of us, and given as our food.* For you keep, O my God, open house, and this table to which You invite me, at which You wish me to sit down as often as I am hungry, you have Yourself prepared expressly that You might be my refuge, and my strength against those who

* See with what bold and courageous words St. Gregory of Nazianzen would wish that every baptised person should reply to the devil : "Strong with the sign of the Cross, which has marked thee, say to him, 'I also am the image of God, and it has not happened to me as to thee, to be precipitated from heaven on account of my pride. I am clothed with Christ ; by baptism Christ has become my property and my happiness ; it is for thee to bend the knee to me.'"—St. Greg. Nazianz., Orat. xl. in Sanctum Baptisma, cap. 10.

persecute me (Ps. xxii. 5). Once more, what an assistance to us is this ancient promise, and to what a degree is it accomplished on our behalf. "He will overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings shalt thou trust" (Ps. xc. 4).

But even the weakest, and apparently the least noticeable means, which the Church makes use of, becomes to us in our spiritual combat a weapon in our favour. It is this virtue of sanctification which, coming from Jesus, has passed into the Church, as from the head into the body, which is indissolubly united to it. And from persons the Church extends this virtue of sanctification to everything she consecrates, blesses, or makes use of. Now, in things, as in the Church, as in Jesus, this holy virtue becomes, in regard to what is evil, a power of excommunication and of expulsion, according to that solemn sentence pronounced by the Master, the execution of which has not since ceased for a single instant. "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (St. John xii. 31). All this is, then, for us a means of the Divine assistance; and there are none, even little children, who have not at their command, and in their hands, those solid bucklers and those sharp swords which we call a crucifix, a relic, an Agnus Dei, a medal, a rosary, a scapular, a drop of holy water, which is enough, if we make use of it with confidence, to repel the assault of our enemy, and drive him far away. The daughters of St. Teresa knew what their Mother thought of holy water, and what she has written, after having tried it.* But if it is so, who will

* I have tried it many times. Nothing is like the power of holy water to drive away the devils, and to hinder them from returning. The virtue, then, of this water must be very great. For myself, I

not come to the conclusion that, subject to such conditions, our warfare is no more than an exercise, or almost a game of play ?

But if God employs His entire creation in our service, it is not to dispense Himself from aiding us Himself. Moreover, what these creatures do for us, they do it at His order and by His direction ; and that He may always remain the first and voluntary cause, there is in this work a part He reserves exclusively for Himself, and, as may be supposed, it is the most excellent part. Now, this part is justly the object of the third kind of the Divine solicitude, which we have called the providence of co-operation. God, Who governs all things around us, is personally present in us, in the very depth of our souls, in the centre of our being, in the most inward part of our essence. He is not there only by His presence of immensity, as He is in the tree which shades us, or in the soil which sustains us ; He is there by a presence of choice, and of free complacence : He is there in those relations with us which His solitary title of Creator does not imply in any way ; in a union so strict and so profound that it surpasses all those of which Nature can give us the experience or the idea. He is there, in short, as He is not anywhere, except in Himself ; and for an end so superior that, as He alone was good enough to destine us for it, He alone has the power to enable us to attain it. He is there as the active prin-

experience a very particular and very sensible consolation whenever I take it ; ordinarily I feel quite a renewal of my whole being, and an interior pleasure, which strengthens my whole soul. This is not an illusion, I have experienced it a great many times, and I have made a very serious study of it.—*St. Teresa's Life*, written by herself, chap. 31.

ciple, the fountain always running, the fire always burning, of our supernatural life—enlightening, sanctifying, deifying by His Grace the very essence of our soul, and extending to all our powers, by those emanations of His Grace which we call the virtues, by that light and sanctity which is wholly Divine. Thus it is He, and not another; He Who is infinite goodness, infinite fidelity, infinite power; Who, without any intermediate action, is our fundamental security and our strength: and, take notice, this active presence of God in us does not suppose any eminent vocation, nor any heroic virtue, nor even the absence of all stain, nor of all irregularity in the will. No; it follows regularly, it follows inevitably, that common state of Christians, which we call the state of grace—a state, you know, which is compatible in the soul with a multitude of venial sins, not only which have been committed, but are actually being committed, and which are actually loved and cherished in the heart. Certainly, this state is always sublime in itself, even though it be so dwarfed and debased within us, that by descending one step lower, man may sin mortally and be separated from God. Well, even in these states, so humiliating, alas! and so frequent, God lives and works supernaturally in the soul: He watches over us from thence as a most interested Witness and a most devoted and most attentive Guide, as a most tender and watchful Mother: He considers our little actions, our slightest impressions, and the least circumstances which happen to us in our daily life, and sends us, when needed, all the actual graces which are necessary to enable us to resist evil suggestions, to avoid sin, and to save our works by saving our persons.

And thence it is, according to St. Thomas, who is fol-

lowed in this by all theologians,* that sanctifying grace, when even at its lowest level, and that consequently charity, though in its least degree, is yet stronger in itself than all temptations ; so that, if the soul believes it, and leans upon it, by the strength of God, and notwithstanding her own weakness, she remains in fact victorious. Do you not think this to be enough, and that, while yielding yourselves up entirely to this belief, for the adorable reasons and on the conditions I have pointed out to you, amidst the whirlwinds and unhealthy currents of our human atmosphere; do you not think, I repeat, that God may now say to our soul, as to the vine-dresser under the old covenant : “What could I have done more for My vineyard, that I have not done for it?” (Isai. v. 4). Yes, saith St. John, “you are of God, little children ; you have His Spirit, you are His chosen people, and you have overcome Antichrist”—that is to say, the power that is secular, obstinate, manifold, which opposes itself to the reign of Jesus, and which is called the devil, the world, and the flesh ; you have overcome him in your head and in principle, and you will finish by overcoming him yourselves, if you will it heartily, for “He that is in you, and works with you, is greater without comparison than he that is in the world” (1 St John iv. 4).

III.

It would be sad to think that you have read these pages, and have seen successively pass before your mind those sweet truths they contain, without having been

* Regit autem Dominus hominem ne inducatur in tentationem per fervorem charitatis : quia charitas, quantumcumque parva, potest resistere cuilibet peccato.—S. Thom. Opus. x. de Orat. Domin.

moved and penetrated more than ever with a lively sentiment of the goodness of God. You have said with David : " How good is God to Israel " (Ps. lxxii. 1) ; and to whom can we compare Him ? You have said with St. John : " His commandments are not grievous " (1 St. John v. 3). You have repeated the words of Jesus : " His yoke is sweet and His burden is light " (St. Matt. xi. 30). Your soul calmed, dilated, fortified, has found itself quite happy in the service of such a Master, so kind, so faithful, so mighty, so devoted, so generous ; far more a Father than a Master, not to say more even a Mother than a Father. Nevertheless, let temptation once come, the certainty of help will by no means lessen in you the feeling of the attack ; and, in order to know convincingly that it is easy for you to conquer, you will not see less clearly that it is easy for you to be overcome. Heaven is with you, but you are on the earth. God has adopted you, but it is Adam who has brought you into the world. Grace invests you, but your own nature is still with you ; and to be actually and voluntarily submissive to the holy empire of God, does not in the least hinder man from being his own master. Finally, it is in vain to be armed, provided, surrounded by robust companions, and guided by an infallible chief ; it is in vain to know that we fight for the holiest of causes, and one which cannot but triumph ; and that, besides, it is a question of heaven or of hell for every one of us. Every one of us must also practise his profession as a soldier : he must endure labour, and face the combat—the painful, the violent combat. We are born on the field of battle, and no one leaves it till after his agony. It will be, then, of small service to have animated your courage by laying the foundation of your

confidence, if we do not point out to you the secrets of these holy combats, the rules you must follow, the measures you must adopt ; in a word, if we do not instruct you in all that spiritual strategy which is drawn from the science of the Saints, and without which even valour itself will not guarantee your success.

Our good God understands this well ; and as He Himself assists you, it is He also who instructs you. "My God is my helper," sings the Royal Prophet. "He is my refuge, my deliverer, my protector, my support, and the horn of my salvation." You see to what extent this holy king counts upon God, and what he declares is due to Him ; yet is God to do all this, and is man to remain passive ? No, certainly. "The Lord," continues David, "hath made my feet like the feet of harts, Who setteth me upon high places, Who teacheth my hands to war, and Who has made my arms like a brazen bow." He has traced out for me rules and taught me His discipline. Therefore (it is the conclusion David draws) "I will pursue after my enemies till I overtake them, and I will not turn again till they are consumed" (Ps. xvii. 3).

The Christian strategy in matter of temptation may be reduced to the three words, which the Holy Spirit gives us in the Holy Scripture : Watch, pray, resist.

We must watch : it is the first recommendation our Lord gives us. "Watch," said He to the three apostles, whom He led to Gethsemane ; "watch, that ye enter not into temptation" (St. Matt. xxvi. 41). But because this lesson is of first importance, what I say to you, my apostles, and to you, the people who listen to me, I say unto all men, without exception, to the end of the world, "watch" (St. Mark xiii. 37). And why ? "Watch," He

said, "because you know neither the day, nor the hour, nor the moment" (St. Matt. xxiv. 42). This is to be understood first, either of His coming at the end of the world to judge all men, or of His coming to judge each individual at his death. But it should be understood also of the assaults of the devil; of Satan who tempts us, as of Christ who judges us; the Scripture speaks of both alike—that they resemble in their coming a thief in the night, who comes suddenly, without any warning, to make us suspect his approach. It is, then, as necessary to watch in order to save us from the one, as to be in readiness to answer to the appeal of the other: so much the more, as, though we know our Lord may come at any hour, yet we are certain that He will come but once, whilst the devil may attack us almost incessantly and lay in ambush for us at every step. The great talent in war is to know how to surprise the enemy; whence it follows that the great fault and the supreme misfortune, is to let yourself be surprised. This is the reason that after a day's battle, the wearied army is permitted to repose, but this never happens without posting around it sentinels, who watch. In short, it is manifest that in these continual combats, in the midst of which we live, vigilance being our first security, is also our first duty.

God has rendered this easy; for if it seems difficult not to sleep when it is night, it is not ordinarily so difficult to watch when it is day. Now, for Christians, it is always day. Christ is their Sun, and this Sun never sets. Not visible to the senses, it remains present and radiant to faith; and as faith, in order to adore Him, plunges even into the Bosom of the Father, where He has His eternal rising, faith finds Him still there, and delights itself in contemplating Him there when He

returns according to the flesh, to take there His eternal repose at the head of His Saints. Whosoever has received the testimony of Christ, in believing His Word, has passed from darkness into the marvellous light of God (1 Peter ii. 9): the light of morning, it is true, but even at its dawn, it is such that the strongest natural light, when compared with it, appears only darkness, and he who has it, becomes "light in the Lord" (Ephes. v. 8). "You are no longer," saith St. Paul, "the children of darkness, you are the children of the day" (1 Thess. v. 5), from which he draws this conclusion: "Let us walk honestly as in the day,"—that is to say, above all, we are to have our eyes open. We are to look before us—to watch.

They do not watch, though it is day, who, notwithstanding their faith, which is too weak to restrain them, voluntarily transgress the Divine law, and fall into the deplorable state of sin. Christ does not retire from them, but they retire from Christ: the Sun surrounds them still with its light, but it is like that sun which shines in the firmament above us, when it sheds its rays upon a dead body; for the sinful soul is much more than asleep, it is dead. And, then, who does not see that it becomes a prey, delivered up to all the wicked wills of the tempter? It has saluted Satan as its king, it has chosen him as its head. What head does not move at will, the members over which it rules? "Whoever commits sin," said Jesus, "is the servant of sin" (St. John viii. 34). This servitude is a law, an inevitable law. Doubtless, the all-powerful mercy of God never abdicates; and faith, which outlives charity, hinders the death of this soul from being complete and final. We cannot then say, that Satan is the absolute master of the sinner; but, nevertheless, how

powerful he is, what impulses he gives, what designs he inspires, what a fire he enkindles, what ruin he causes, what dark shadows he gathers round him: "evils without number," says the royal penitent, "have surrounded me, my iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see" (Ps. xxxix. 13). And if this is true of the sinner who retains his faith, what shall be said of the sinner who has lost it? One thing only should astonish us; it is, that when a soul has ceased to be in the grace of God, every temptation does not come upon it, and that it does not give way to them all!

Here, then, is the first vigilance we must oppose to temptation: the vigilance of the state of grace, the return of the soul to the Christian light, the interior eye kept capable of seeing the true light.

But, further, it is necessary that the Christian living in the state of grace, and who can open his eyes, should keep them effectually open, and that, interdicting sleep, he should keep himself from drowsiness. What resistance does a man make when he is asleep? and what combats can a sleepy man sustain? Now the soul sleeps, and is consequently exposed to the attacks of the enemy, when that soul is idle, effeminate, cowardly, pusillanimous, terrified at every sacrifice, overcome by all serious labour; which is rich, perhaps, in desires, but is poor in resolutions, and still more so in good works; which studies itself in everything, almost always follows its own inclinations, and allows itself to drift with the current,—that soul is sleepy, and no longer watches, which is lukewarm, to whom the remembrance of its sins, the experience of the graces of God, the thought of eternal joys, the holy mysteries of Jesus, and His sweet sacraments, cause only an emotion which is superficial, transitory, and sterile.

That soul falls asleep who spends its time in pensive musings, and who, disgusted with real life and its austere obligations, amuses itself with vain imaginations, and indulges in charming phantoms. To act thus, especially to live thus, is not to keep yourself watchful, but to provoke and urge on the devil; it is to offer him your hand, and to half open to him your heart. We may not render any account to ourselves of such a state of things, and we may fancy ourselves far distant even from ever wishing it; yet we act too much as if we wished it, and the germ at least of that will is already existing in the soul. If we lead ourselves into temptation, what probability is there that we shall escape from it, and especially that we shall resist it? We must say the same of those who are wont to act from inclination and passion. It is even sparing them, to put them in the ranks of the sleepers, when so often their place would be among the blind. At all events, they also fail in the duty of vigilance, and therefore have no longer the right to hope for frequent triumphs.

Distrust, in this point of view, all exciting pleasures, especially if they come from the senses—as also those intoxications of nature which follow certain successes, and excesses of sensibility which reason reproves. Distrust that state of quietude in which prosperity, though ever so short-lived, ordinarily places us; but do not less distrust weariness of mind, melancholy, discouragement under all its forms, idleness, and all squandering away of time. All this troubles the eye of the interior, darkens, enervates it, and lessening our vigilance, augments so much the more, the chances of temptation. Reason in the same way of habitual giddiness, and thoughtlessness, of dissipation, of curiosity—in a word, of

all intemperance, whether of the mind or of the heart. The due measure is a camp, out of which no one places his foot, without immediately finding himself in an enemy's country.

Another obstacle to holy sagacity and to Christian vigilance, is that worldly and carnal wisdom which St. James fears not to call diabolical (St. James iii. 15), and which deserves this name, because this false wisdom withdraws us from the luminous sphere in which faith keeps us, and leads us by little and little, through the thickening gloom of earthly desires, loves, and calculations, to that deadly darkness of which Satan is at once the prince and the centre. You will not be sufficiently enlightened unless you endeavour to be supernaturally wise.

But, labouring thus to keep your eyes open, try at the same time to preserve the atmosphere of your soul quite free and quite pure. You know that nothing so conduces to sleep as an atmosphere which is heavy and charged with thick vapours. Now, every fault, though it be but small, thickens, more or less, the air we breathe; if these faults multiply, especially if the heart is attached to them, the air of the interior becomes so heavy that the soul is weighed down by it, and consequently, can hardly avoid, for any length of time, giving way to sleep. Determine, then, to be always watchful, that your conscience may be without stain.

Be also simple: be simple in your thoughts, in your affections, in your intentions, in your ways, in your works, in your soul, and in your whole life. To attend to so many things is equivalent, in practice, to attending to nothing. To set your heart on too many objects is to weaken it; and to weaken it, is more than to expose it.

Let nothing in your conduct be ambiguous and uncertain. "He that walketh sincerely," saith the Holy Ghost, "walketh confidently" (Prov. x. 9). Have one only end in view : God—His will and His service, His glory and His joy, which, by the rays they shed on us, become our joy and our glory ; have but one only means : Jesus—His Word, His Grace, and His Holy Spirit ; one only direction, and this means, only one intention. Nearly all the secret of vigilant Christianity, and therefore, of the sweet and holy peace which it produces, consists in this simplification of the interior regard. "If thy eye is single"—that is, simple—saith Jesus, "thy whole body shall be lightsome"—that is, full of light (St. Matt. vi. 21) : thy whole body—that is, thy thoughts, thy works, and thy whole life. And then, what possible alliance can there be between the darkness of temptation and this light of grace of which you are full ? Shadows on approaching it, may serve to increase its splendour, and render it more admirable. Yes : that is possible ; but darkness mingling with it, to obscure its brilliancy—never. Oh ! if having two eyes, we had but one look ! if, as we have but one heart, we had also but one love, in what light would our days flow on ! and how, walking here below free, tranquil, unconquered, invincible, we should wound, we should rejoice, we should ravish, the Heart of our Heavenly Spouse (Cant. iv. 9). Watch, then, and be attentive ; watch over yourselves ; watch around you.

Watch over yourselves. Avoid too many examinations of conscience, for this is an abuse, and causes you trouble rather than gives you light. When you examine yourselves, do it without distress of mind, without minuteness of detail, without intensity of thought. God

does not wish that an act which He demands of us, and the object of which is to lead us to Himself, should degenerate into a torment. To avoid this, it will be oftentimes enough to make this examination before our Lord, at His Feet, under His Eye, close to His Heart; instead of making it only before yourself. But with this reservation, and attending to this direction, regard and judge the spirit which animates you, the motives which influence your determinations, the intentions which direct your actions. Take an account, not only of your faults, but of their causes—whether absolutely wicked or simply imperfect—whence these faults proceed. Look at the general state of your heart; search especially for its weak and defective side, knowing that the enemy is thoroughly aware of it, and marks it, and it is by this way he seeks to enter your soul. Even when you have the grace and the virtue to pass yourself by, so as to forget yourself, to think only of God and His perfections, of Jesus and His mysteries—do not dispense yourselves altogether from this duty of examination of conscience. However rapidly you may make it, this look into your interior is still necessary; and, besides, being in reality only the application to your soul of the higher light in which you live, or, if you like it better, the voluntary and conscious passing of your soul into this light, you will have the advantage of it without the inconvenience, and you need not even pay by a single distraction for the precious security which it will bring you.

Finally, watch around you. Consider the circumstances, the habits, the difficulties, the occasions of temptation or of sin, in the midst of which you live: those which spring from your state of life, from the

functions you have to discharge, and which are, therefore, for you in the order of Providence; those also which are more rare, and only offer themselves accidentally; those temptations, especially, of which you are personally the cause, and which, consequently, depend upon your liberty. Pray to God to preserve you from all illusion and from all weakness in this delicate search. You require to be particularly assisted from on High to know how to discern in practice what is true and what is wise; but the best means of obtaining this grace, is to be sincerely disposed to obey it, cost what it may, as soon as you have received it. You understand, that on this point, vigilance is only the first view, or, rather, the first act of prudence. Do not expose yourselves, then, without sufficient reason, to the danger—I do not say, of committing sin, but even of being tempted. You must have in this matter a mixture of liberty and of fear, of confidence in God and of distrust of yourself, of courage and discretion, of which it is only the Holy Spirit that can effect the just proportion. In every case, the most ordinary wisdom dictates, that, apart from the known and certain will of God, or, if not certainly known, yet reasonably presumed to be such, we should never venture to enter an unhealthy region, and, especially, we must not fix ourselves there. “Do not remain in the country about Sodom,” said the angels of God to Lot, “lest thou also be consumed” (Gen. xix. 17). Take great notice of this counsel, remembering those Divine words: “He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it” (Eccles. xiii. 1); and “he who loves danger shall perish in it” (*Ibid.* iii. 27). In fine, I repeat that grand word, of which you will now comprehend better the full bearing—Watch.

But our Lord, Who tells us to watch, commands us also to pray. These two recommendations always go together in the Gospel, and this lesson is often repeated therein.

Though we cannot practise watching, in a way that may be useful to the soul, if God does not enlighten and sustain us, yet it would seem that this watchfulness is especially a human practice, while prayer is a Divine one. Watching can give us some earthly security, but prayer brings us the help of Heaven. The first also appears to aim rather at our avoiding a combat ; the proper effect of the second, is to give us courage to engage in it, and in the end to secure us the victory. However, both are necessary, and, if you join them together, you will understand how true are those sweet words of the wise man : " The net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings " (Prov. i. 17).

What is said of prayer as a help in temptation, is clearly applicable to prayer in all its forms, whether it be vocal or mental ; whether we borrow it, or whether we compose it ; whether it issues from the soul as a cry of inspiration, or as the voice of its anguish ; whether it expresses fear, or confidence, or love, or adoration ; whether it casts the heart on God, or whether it calls God into the heart ; whether it be only a mere remembrance, a holy thought called forth or conceived, a pious image voluntarily placed before the inward eye, of what is true, good, edifying, and Christian ; or whether there follows a movement in the soul, beyond, towards Heaven, a drawing near to God, a regard cast upon His goodness, a recourse to His Providence,—all this is of value against the enemy, scatters gloom, soothes trouble, weakens the influence of evil, and chases away the devil. Exercise great

liberty in these matters, and let everyone follow, without scruple, that kind of prayer which she feels most drawn to ; your particular attraction will indicate most commonly the true wants of your soul.

We cannot, however, omit to mention, and to recommend you, in a particular manner, the prayers of Holy Scripture. God declares that all that is written in that blessed book "has been written for our instruction," but certainly also for our support and our protection. First of all, each word of the sacred text is a Divine truth announced in the language of man, a created ray of the eternal Sun, a fragment of the Word made Flesh. On this ground, every phrase of the Bible has a sort of sacramental character, and therefore becomes also an exorcism against Satan.* You see by the history of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, how we may, in these holy combats, make use of the Scripture. To recall it to mind, to quote it, to lean upon it with faith, is, in a manner, to clothe yourself with Christ. Now this vestment is an armour, and this armour is impenetrable. But if such is the force of every word of this inspired book, what will be the efficacy of the prayers which God has been pleased to have written therein ? What must

* We may say the same of the Symbol of the Faith. This is why, in the ancient discipline of the Church, the Creed was solemnly delivered to the catechumens on the Wednesday of the fourth week of Lent, when the priest said to them, among other things, "You should retain in your hearts this short form, so as to use, at all times, as a help, the confession it contains. The power of this weapon is irresistible against all the snares of the enemy ; it ought to be familiar to the true soldiers of Jesus Christ. Let the devil, then, who never ceases to tempt man, find you always armed with this symbol."—Translation of Dom Guéranger, Liturgical Year, Lent. We may say the same, in proportion, of the text of all Religious rules and constitutions, approved by the Holy Church.

be the value before God of a prayer composed by Him, for the use of man, when it is piously recited by man? Saint Paul says that "God cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. ii. 13). Can He refuse Himself? Can He resist Himself? Do we not find in these Divine prayers the authentic form of those "unspeakable" and incessant groanings of the Holy Spirit, in holy souls during their exile on this earth? (Rom. viii. 26). Is it not this infinitely varied, this powerful and universal cry, of which the Holy Spirit is the origin in our hearts, and which penetrates even the inmost heart of God? is it not this cry which forces Him to remember that He is truly our Father? (Rom. viii. 15). Are not these the prayers of Christ, the beloved Son of the same Father, living in our nature, walking in our ways, carrying our sins, submitting to our trials, our wearinesses, our assaults, our sufferings, and demanding, as one of ourselves, help and protection from God?

This is principally true of the Psalter. The Psalter is pre-eminently the book of the prayer of Christ, militant and patient. During the days of His mortal life, our Lord certainly recited the Psalms, deriving from them, to the profit of His infirm humanity, the strength which His Divinity had stored up in them expressly for that purpose; and that these holy canticles were recited by Him, and that they are the expression of His Heart, and the utterance of His Lips, make them the more dear to us, and of the greater efficacy and service. The light which the Psalms give forth is indeed dazzling; they are full of unction and full of grace. You know that Jesus recited them in His Own Name and in ours; many of them could not be suitable for Him, except that in them He takes our place, and appropriates to Himself our various conditions. And, as it might have been said

then, that we already recited them in Him, so now we can say that He recites them in us. It is one of the prodigious effects of that living communion with Him, in which His grace places us. You see, then, how the Father, always hearing Jesus when we pray, graciously hears us also in Him.

Study this incomparable book. Formerly, Christians learned the Psalter by heart ; let it be at least familiar to us. It may serve many ends, but make use of it especially in your spiritual combats. We cannot possibly imagine any state of soul, however painful, any kind, any shade, or degree of temptation, any human or Divine trial, which has not in some Psalm, its exact and complete expression, with the prayer which is suitable to it. What a resource, and what strength may we not find in the Psalter ! Yes ; poor souls among you that are troubled, unquiet, weak, distracted ; souls tempted against faith, or against hope, almost seduced, perhaps, and already half overcome ; souls weighed down with care, with loathing, with sadness, follow the counsel of St. James, which is first of all that of Jesus—pray (St. James v. 13). But, believe me, take often, take habitually your prayer from these Divine pages ; read a Psalm, or some verses from a Psalm, and, if you can, chant or sing it. As the harp of the young Psalmist calmed the rage of Saul, and drove from him the evil spirit (1 Kings xvi. 33), these canticles will withdraw you from evil influences, and, putting all in order in your soul, will restore it to calm and serenity.

Oh, that we had more faith in prayer ! Never should we be overcome ! At the bottom of all temptation there is hell ; but at the summit of all prayer there is God. We never pray without God making Himself present in

the soul—that is to say, without His doing there some new and marvellous work. Now the active presence of God burns Satan, and exterminates him. In the relation which that unhappy being has himself established with God, it is a necessity that all divine action should contradict, torture, crush, and precipitate him into the abyss.

Pray, then. Doubtless God, being all love, is always inclined, so far as He is concerned, to do us good; and this inclination, which is natural to Him, grace puts into all beings whom He unites to Himself by the Holy Spirit. Further, neither in Him, nor in them, is this inclination ever inactive. God and His Saints do us good, as the sun warms us, and as the fountain pours forth its waters. If it happens—which often, or rather daily, takes place—that any pain afflicts our heart, it is of faith, that by the mere fact of our trouble, God approaches nearer to us. “The Lord,” says the Royal Prophet, “is nigh to them that are of a troubled heart” (Ps. xxxiii. 19). However, it pleases Him to ordain that in the exercise of His goodness towards us, in a greater or less degree, we ourselves should determine His conduct in our regard. He wishes that we should pray to Him; and though His Heart is so open, He gives us the key of it, enjoining us to make use of it for ourselves, which is much less the act of a master exercising a right, than the effort and skill of a physician who is too devoted to his patient not to wish to eradicate the causes of his malady; and still more perhaps, it is the exquisite refinement of a friend, who, in his relations with us, acts with the greatest delicacy, and who, in the act of obliging us, takes care to pay us honour. Jesus said, “Come unto me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you” (St. Matt. xi. 28). Never allow temp-

tation, then, to make so much noise in your soul, that you can no longer hear that ravishing invitation. Go to Him Who calls you ; and never so authoritatively, never so tenderly, as at the time when you have need of Him. And how often He only permits your trouble, to make you guess the need He has Himself to see you nearer to Him, and to constrain you sweetly to come !

Pray to your Heavenly Father, your true Father ; pray to the Son, your true Brother ; pray to the Holy Ghost, the living love of this Father and of this Brother, the infinite love which they give you, and which gives Them to you. Ask the Father to see in you the Face of His Christ : “ look on the Face of Thy Christ ” (Ps. lxxxiii. 10). It is a most efficacious prayer ; and were you exteriorly in the hands of Satan at the time when you said it, this would not hinder God from recognising Jesus in you, since, in His love for us, Jesus deigned to let Himself once be touched and carried by his hateful hands. Pray to the suffering, the compassionate, the all-powerful Humanity of Jesus ; pray to His Sacred Heart, whence all grace flows in torrents ; pray to Him in the Holy Eucharist, where He is so absolutely ours, that He comes there only to pass into us. Pray to the most Holy Virgin, good with every kind of goodness, and who seems to have been constituted the Mother of God, only to become a better mother to us. “ Can a woman forget her infant ? ” (Isaias xlix. 15.) Is she ever deaf to its voice, or has she ever any distraction when it speaks to her, or is she indifferent to its interests, without emotion in its dangers, without compassion for its sufferings ? and when this is possible with other mothers, is it possible with her ? Have recourse, then, to her. A temptation exposed, brought, and confided to Mary, is a temptation

overcome ; or rather it is transformed, for, of that germ of sin which it contained, this Holy Virgin infallibly makes it a germ of virtue and of glory.

Pray to the good angels, and first of all to your own angel-guardian, who watches over you and is devoted to you, but who, forget it not, will assist you so much the more as you invoke him more, with more humility, piety, and confidence. As you can frustrate his action, so you can favour it. To pray to him, is to assist him in his work. Pray to St. Michael, who first sustained the great cause of Christ, the antagonist of Satan, the angel-guardian of the Church, established, says the holy Liturgy, as the keeper of all the souls whom God wishes to receive.* Pray to St. Gabriel, the angel of the Incarnation, full of zeal to procure and to defend the fruits of this mystery. Pray to St. Raphael, "one of the seven who stand before the throne of God" (Tobias xii. 15), and at the same time so devoted to our interests, so divinely mixed up with our affairs, knowing so many secrets for driving out the devil, possessing so many balms for healing our infirmities ! Pray to each of the three hierarchies, according as the special character of their glories and of their functions seems to have more analogy with the temptation which torments you. Thus, against the decays of holy love, or the solicitations of love that is foolish or impure, pray to the Seraphim. If you are assailed with doubts contrary to faith, troubled with sophisms, seduced by false science, have recourse to the Cherubin. Implore the help of the Thrones to defend you from inconstancy, irresolution, unsteadiness of mind, frailty of heart, in a word, all inequality in the service of God. When temptation falls upon you like a thunder-

* Off. S. Michael. Antiph. Laud.

clap, and you endure one of those violent assaults which seem to reveal the presence and the action of a greater number of devils, or of one more formidable than the rest, call to your assistance the Principalities, the Dominations, and the Powers. In your languours, in your discouragements, in all those dangerous distastes which duty often inspires, invoke the Virtues.

And what I have said to you about the angels, apply it, also, to the Saints. You have your patrons, patrons in religion, of your baptism, who in the order of intercession are for you almost what your angel-guardians are in the order of help. You have your saints of devotion and affection; in a word, the multitude of the blessed, who, being all the friends of Jesus, are naturally yours also, and whose succour you will never implore in vain.

I repeat it: there is in such invocations an incalculable strength, and which, had we to sustain the temptations of that holy man Job, would more than suffice for all our needs.

But, as the enemy well knows, one of his first and principal temptations is to tempt us precisely on the subject of prayer. At the moment when he sees that you have the most need of prayer, he labours to turn you away from it, and to make it almost impossible for you to pray. Either he fills the mind with distractions, or he strives to weaken your hope, to narrow your heart, to hamper your activity, and to enchain you in inability. To say a Pater, to make an invocation, to breathe towards God a filial sigh, this seems an effort like that of crossing an ocean, or removing a mountain. The soul is benumbed and frozen: we believe, that we have lost our faith, that we are in darkness, and that without doubt, we are already in sin. It is from respect for God, that

we are not willing to approach Him in such a state ; very far from appeasing Him, we shall only offend Him more ; the heart would give the lie to what the lips would utter ; and otherwise, what good would there be in it ? We have already at other times prayed so much ; we have made no advance ; we have always to begin again, and after so many years, and so many efforts, we find ourselves just where we began. Such are the deceits, and the snares of this impostor. Understand his wiles, and at any price, baffle him. Defend, save your prayer, being certain by that means, you will save all the rest. "Blessed be God," said David, "Who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me" (Ps. lxxv. 20). Pray, even though you do not save it, pray with violence ; I mean, force yourself to pray ; and if it happens, that God, for a hidden purpose, seems to connive with Satan in making you wait, apparently at least, the success of your prayer, then redouble your energy, and your confidence ; do, as Jesus did, Who, falling into an agony, prolonged His prayer (St. Luke xxii. 23) ; insist, persevere ; infallibly you will conquer. I cannot promise you that you will not have much to suffer in these conflicts ; but hold for certain, that each victory thus gained, is worth a thousand others.

We must watch, we must pray ; but, finally, we must resist. Prayer obtains help, but this help must be made use of, and this use means resistance. Again, we must act also, in order that we may be divinely assisted, and precisely because God aids us. When St. Paul speaks of the combats of faith, and calls us the soldiers of Christ, it is moral theology that He teaches us, not poetry or rhetoric. This duty of resistance is besides mentioned

several times in the apostolic epistles ; it even seems that the account of that supernatural armour of which we read the description in the Epistle to the Ephesians, has been given us chiefly with a view of rendering this resistance easy. In fact, to keep our ground, to continue firm, to hold out with courage, is the first thing we have to do. "Resist the devil," saith St. James, "and he will fly from you" (St. James iv. 7). Though he should prowl round about you, keep within yourself. Take care of your soul, close its eyes, stop its ears. The enemy asks of you your attention only for a moment ; he will pretend to have only one word to say to you, and this may be very true ; but know that this one word may be in you like a spark in a pile of wood, perhaps in a magazine of powder. Be then intractable, refuse every compliance, and refuse it immediately. It is, in this matter, a sort of first principle, not to hold parley with temptation. Would that our first mother had not forgotten this, in the terrestrial paradise !

Sometimes a single interior act of contempt, whether for the object of the temptation, or for the tempter himself, will be enough to deliver you. At other times, this act would be a luxury ; it will be sufficient if you take no notice of it, if you give yourself a distraction, if you enter upon some serious occupation, were it some manual labour. Many temptations derive their importance, and become dangerous, only from the fact that we are too anxious about them. There are a thousand thoughts, a thousand images which may flit across the mind, a thousand sentiments unreflected upon, which move our heart or our senses, which we must treat as the traveller does insects which hum around his head, or as particles of dust, raised by his feet in walking. To simple

souls all things are simple ; on the contrary, there are no persons so often so cruel, and so dangerously tormented, as the perplexed, doubtful, and scrupulous ; and even more than these, those who are habitually not straightforward and upright towards themselves, and sincere with God.

But notwithstanding all you can do, there are times when it will not be possible to withdraw from temptation, at so small a cost. There will be no means to give yourselves a distraction ; you are besieged ; even contempt is no longer to be used ; such are the forces, employed by the enemy, that you are obliged to count them. You are broken in upon, clasped, enveloped in darkness, and submerged under the waves. Of all the bad instincts of the heart and of the body there is not a single one which is not under the charm, caressed, pleased, and to all appearance gained over to the enemy. These are the shameful and painful states, of which the Prophet so often speaks : “The waters,” he says, “are come in even to my soul ; I stick fast in the mire of the deep” (Ps. lxxviii. 1). The whole of our animal nature seems brought out and fully developed under the secret and perfidious touches of our harassing seducer. In vain does the will decline and protest ; it does not hinder either the vivacity of the temptation, or destroy its sweet charm. We are, as it were, intoxicated, and almost insane.* At other times

* There is no one, ever so little acquainted with the lives of the Saints, who does not know that these paroxysms of temptation have occurred to them. Besides the facts so well known of St. Benedict and St. Francis of Assisium, there is in the history of St. Catherine of Sienna, a celebrated and consoling example (see her Life by the Blessed Raymond of Capua, ch. 11). That of the Blessed Angela of Foligno was not less remarkable (see the Book of her Visions,

it is a fever of incredulity, of revolt and independence, which suddenly masters the soul, and seems at the first attack, not only to withdraw it from God, but to place it in opposition to Him, as a rival power, alleging its rights, claiming what is due, and stating its complaints. Or, moreover, they are violent feelings of anger and of hatred against our neighbour. In fact, there is no passion which has not its demon, and which may not with his co-operation, stir up tempests within us. What are we then to do? To pray, to pray always, to pray fervently; but also to resist, keep our ground, contradict; say no, when all says yes; to speak of duty, when all speaks of pleasure; to speak of God, when all speaks of ourselves. If you do this, you resist, and truly all is safe. As all the human family was in the ark, when, conducted by God, it floated on the waters of the deluge; thus all your moral life is in this act of the will, in this refusal, in this word which there is no need even to articulate. And not only your moral life, but also that sanctifying grace, which constitutes its divine vigour and value, and with this grace all the virtues which are its development.* For if there are any of these virtues of which your will is not the immediate seat, as it is the seat of charity, which excels and gives life to all the rest, even

translated by Hello, ch. 19). We mention this for the encouragement of good souls, and especially of virgins consecrated to God.

* Have you ever seen, Philothea, a great brazier of fire covered with cinders? When you come ten or twelve hours afterwards to look for a fire, you find only a very small one in the centre of the hearth, and then it is difficult to find it. Yet it was there, because you find it there, and with that you can light up again all the other coals which are gone out. It is the same with charity, which is our spiritual life among great and violent temptations.—St. Francis of Sales, *Introd. to a Devout Life*, Part iv., ch. 3.

those it has stored up ; and as it is its duty to maintain them, it has also the power to guard them. Now, it guards them in this way,—there is sometimes, it seems, only the extreme summit of the soul, as it were, but a point which appears above an ocean of mire ; it does not matter, your liberty is in this point ; this summit has its projection, on purpose that the Divine sun should gild it ; it has a breadth sufficient for the feet of Jesus to be placed upon it. It is the effect of resistance.

Without speaking of the grace which always and everywhere continues to be its first principle, this strength of resistance comes to us from several causes ; and the first cause of all is faith : faith is our royal weapon. Nothing can conquer him who handles it well ; nothing can cast him down ; nothing can allure him ; nothing can shake him. Faith is much more than a weapon—it is the foundation and the energy of our spiritual temperament. It is by faith that we become divinely robust, and in consequence, easily victorious. The Holy Writings in a thousand places declare that it is pre-eminently the virtue which triumphs. Read again, the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, you will see what faith renders a man capable of doing. St. John says, formally, “that it is the great secret of our victory over the world” (1 St. John v. 4) ; and St. Peter, “that it enables us to cope with Satan” (1 Peter v. 9.) The fact is, that when the Disciples demanded of our Lord why they were not able to cast out the devil, He replied : “because of your unbelief ;” and He added : “Amen, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain : Remove from hence thither, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible for you”

(St. Matt. xvii. 19). And when is it that hell will have so much credit here on earth, that Satan will seem to have become the master of the world? At that unhappy epoch of which Jesus Christ has said: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (St. Luke xviii. 8) this Divine Light, which is Jesus, is faith, which I have already told you, makes Him shine in the soul. Now, when He beams forth in all His brightness (and this brightness increases in proportion as faith becomes more lively), then every shadow will vanish away, and all temptation shall cease. It is also in this sense, "that the truth makes us free" (St. John viii. 32).

Turn over in your mind, if not the history of your temptations, at least, that of your falls, and you will see that when you yielded to the tempter, it was only by losing sight of one or more of the truths of which faith assures us. God has appeared to you less present, or less faithful, or less solicitous for your interests; you have not counted on Him as you were wont to do; you have doubted His grace—doubted, perhaps, the efficacy of prayer; Heaven, with its beauties, has been veiled to your eyes; sin has begun to appear to you less horrible, and the judgments of God have been less terrible. In a word, in one way or another, your faith has suffered an eclipse, and this is the reason why your heart has given way. Will you, then, surely and always avoid this calamity? Oh! first of all cultivate in you this fundamental virtue of faith; labour to make it stronger.*

* I hold it for certain, that God will never permit anyone to be deceived, who, distrusting himself in everything, is so firm in the faith, that for the least revealed truth, he is ready to die a thousand deaths.—St. Teresa: see her Life, written by herself; ch. 25.

But further, when the adversary is at hand and the time is critical, make acts of faith formal acts—make them many times, shall I say, make them with obstinacy.

A second principle of resistance is humility. If faith wounds Satan on the head, humility wounds his heart; and as to those other sources of temptation—I mean, our concupiscences—humility overthrowing the first of the three, which is pride, easily obtains satisfaction from the rest. Then, if you are tempted, humble yourself. I do not ask you to humble yourself before Satan, though in a certain manner we may do that; but, ordinarily, it is so seldom fitting, as to be often without fruit. On the condition of doing it humbly, it seems more to the purpose to humble Satan himself; and, in all cases, it is important never to humble yourself before him in your character as a Christian. But when the temptation presses, make interior acts of humility—acts which are then as easy as they are opportune; for without speaking of the shame, we feel that we should be thus incited to evil, when do we feel more than at that time our own weakness? If the occasion allows, and prudence permits, humble yourself before your neighbour. It is generally more sure to be an act of humility, than when we humble ourselves before ourselves: it ranks first in the order of virtue, and hence, it is more efficacious in the order of resistance. At least, whenever you judge it to be possible and wise, make that excellent act of humility, which consists in opening your mind to him who has a right to hear you on this matter of temptation. Self-love will often find in this its punishment: this is the reason why it is so anxious to counsel you to keep silence; but the punishment is not too much for him who merits death, and the disquieting labour of this

domestic demon tells you clearly the gain you will have by not listening to him at all. Manifest yourselves, then; make known your trial and the craft of the devil, and, in almost every instance, you will be immediately freed from it, and find yourself in peace. Finally, however much you are tempted, remain humble under the Hand of God. Never forget, but especially in your combats, that it is with God alone that you have to do. "The fire, the hail, the hoarfrost, the spirit of storms"—what are they in reality but the instruments of God, and what do they but obey Him? David said: "They fulfil His Word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8)—that is to say, without any doubt they execute His orders, without power to overpass them a single step; but—this is to say, also, that in their fashion and for their part, they do the work that God seeks for in all His creatures, and which He labours for, especially in you, when temptation tries you; they impress on you the form of your predestination—that form which is eternal and Divine; they create in you the image of God; they form in you the Word Incarnate—Jesus Christ. Now, seeing by faith, that in the moment of temptation, God does precisely this work, and makes use, for your sanctification, of the consequences, the fruits, and the remains of your sins, humble yourselves by penance, humble yourselves by piety, humble yourselves by admiration, by gratitude, and by love. Such conduct would be an act of justice, and also an act of wisdom and of holy resolution.*

* I am accustomed, in these moments of intolerable suffering, to recommend myself to God from the bottom of my heart, and to make interior acts of resignation. I ask of our Lord the grace of patience, and forthwith I am willing, if it be for His glory, to remain in this state to the end of the world.—St. Teresa: her Life by herself, ch. 31.

You have seen the bonds which unite humility and mortification. Have I any occasion to tell you, that in your combats with evil, mortification joins hands with humility, and that the life they protect in common is a life sheltered and sacred? Habitual mortification, and sometimes, actual, is, when requisite, and will be, your powerful, and sometimes, your necessary succour. On the contrary, if you are unmortified, you become to yourselves your own world and your own devil. Satan can repose himself at your feet and take his rest, assured that his work will be done without his aid. It is true that he does not sleep; but he can take his rest and laugh.

After this, what is that strength which is at once supreme, decisive, and invincible? You have all named it; it is love. The Holy Spirit declares, that "love is strong as death;" and when it is jealous—that is to say, when it has its measure, its truth, its life, and its essential ardour, it becomes so firm and so inflexible, that hell itself, far from injuring it, is broken against it (Cant. viii. 6). Love is the term of faith—its last act and its crown; it is the flower of hope, the fruit, the full unfolding, and the glory of grace. It unites us to God, delivering Him to us and us to Him, according to the words in the Canticle of Canticles: "My beloved to me, and I to Him, until the daybreak" (Cant. ii. 16)—that is to say, this union of love will endure always; for, of itself, as you know, the bond of this love is indissoluble.

Love Jesus; not as He merits to be loved—the creature is incapable of this—but, at least, according to the full extent and the energy that God has given you. What power will any temptation whatever have, then, against you? Have you not become, by the sole fact of

this love, the contrary of Satan? Is not this love the radical negative of his reign? Does it not establish you far above your senses, far above the world, and, as it were, at the antipodes of hell? If it is true, that even then, he may try to seduce you, what chance has he to gain you? "Depart from me, food of death," said the Virgin Agnes to some one who pursued her; "my heart is already engaged, and I am no longer free."* What well-grounded hope would anyone have, that a wife would betray a husband whom she passionately loved? or, that a mother would deceive, that she would rob, or, that she would wound her favourite son? Imagine, that at the hour when Magdalen returned to Calvary, overcome with grief, but especially with love for Him Whom love had just crucified there, one of her former accomplices had approached her and offered her some treacherous consolation, would she have been indignant. No; she would have taken that man for a fool, and would have replied to him as a dead body replies to a caress.

In Heaven we are far from sin—so far, that temptation, or even the idea of evil, cannot enter there. Why? Because there we love perfectly that God Whom we see intuitively. Love produces this innocence, this sanctity, this security. Without doubt, so long as we are "absent from the Lord," seeing Him only as in a glass, darkly, we are not altogether able to love Him as we shall in Paradise; yet, this charity which, by the Holy Spirit, is now "shed abroad in our hearts," is identically the same as that in Heaven; it is the same in kind—it differs only in degree; and even as to degree, if the soul gives itself totally to the Holy Spirit, to what degree of love can it not raise it, even in this world? Oh, yes! it is the

* Office of St. Agnes: Roman Breviary,—Antiph. 1. Noct.

honour of the Church, that we have so much loved, that we always can love, Jesus Christ so much ! and is it not from the depth of our shadows that have gone forth those cries and those challenges? "For what have I in Heaven, and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth? For Thee, my flesh and my heart hath fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii. 25); and: "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?—but in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35). Do you wish, then, to have your sojourn in a region—I do not say, free from storms—there is none such here below; but so high and so pure, that the storms which arise there always remain under your feet, strive to obtain a great, a strong, a generous love.

And finally, it is my last word; though indeed I have said it to you already, that nothing surpasses love; but this word, indicating the purest and the most perfect condition of love, expresses thereby, also, that which elevates our strength to its height and ensures us the fulness of peace, so far as it can be possessed in this present life: in order then to succeed in becoming perfectly free, strong, and unconquerable, ask of God the grace of holy joy, and practise this sanctifying virtue.* In principle, a joyous

* It was the recommendation of St. Anthony to his disciples (See his Life, by St. Athanasius, *passim*, and especially No. 42).

character is a condition very favourable to the spiritual life, and truly, an enormous advance in it. The sad—I do not say, the serious—but the sad, are sad combatants. It is absolutely incalculable how habitual sadness opens the soul and exposes it to temptations of every kind; and if, whatever may be otherwise its cause or its reasons, this sadness is not resisted; if, on the contrary, it is entertained, cultivated, and relished, the soul will never finish counting her defeats. But as regards character, nature alone supplies almost all that is needful; we can only congratulate those who are born with such happy dispositions. He who has not had this good fortune should supply it by virtue; and although this virtue is sublime—perhaps because it is sublime—there is none to which grace urges us so willingly, and in which it aids us more. It is quite enough for this end, that it is grace—that is to say, something which is strong because it is charming, something which comes from love, something which, born one day of a smile of the good God, blooms for ever in glory and in beatitude. To say the truth, all is joy in grace. What is the Gospel, but the announcement made to the entire humanity of a Divine and Infinite joy? “Behold,” said the angel of Bethlehem, “I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people” (St. Luke ii. 10). What is Baptism—if not the joy of God commencing to dawn in our hearts? What is penance, but the joy of our Heavenly Father finding again His prodigal son, and obliging him, by rendering

All the saints repeat it, and with them, all the masters of the spiritual life. Father Faber writes: “How can we triumph over temptations? We must have for this good humour, again good humour, always good humour.—Progress of the Spiritual Life; vol. ii., ch. 15.

him pure, to become joyful himself? and the Eucharist, what is it but the joy of joys—a joy which might make even good angels envious! In the main, Jesus is nothing but joy; His religion is only joy—but such a joy, that it makes it a joy to weep, and renders suffering a happiness. When we reach this point, on what, on whom do we depend, except on God? What is there on earth that we do not command? Whoever is thus placed, what has he to fear? “Blessed are they who mourn! Blessed are they who live stripped of all! Blessed are they who hunger and thirst! Blessed, beyond all the rest, are they who suffer persecution for justice’ sake!” and it is certainly to suffer persecution for justice, to be tempted by the world or by the devil. Such are the Divine sentences. Make them the support of your heart, the light of your ways, the law of your life. Treat, by means of joy, this evil of temptation, regarding it always and at first, on the side which may make you joyful; take all joyously, according to the expression of St. James: “My brethren,” he says, “count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations” (St. James i. 2). Force the devil, who wishes only to make you suffer, to see that the only and unfailing effect of his malice is to render you more and more content; then you will taste that peace of God of which St. Paul says: that “it surpasseth all understanding” (Philip. iv. 7); and continuing to live for the short time that remains of this life, exiled according to the flesh, but I venture to say, that according to the spirit, you will have commenced to inherit your everlasting country.

ON HOLY POVERTY.

BEFORE considering the first of the three evangelical counsels which regard holy poverty, it is necessary to explain the nature, the reason, and the scope of these counsels which God has given us.

Man has need of good counsel. He does not always feel this need ; he is not always willing, at least, to recognise it ; but this need exists. Life is so complicated ; we have so many duties to perform in it, and they are so difficult ; so many of our affairs in it are so pressing, and so arduous ; so many roads in it cross each other before us ! Things around us have such different aspects ! So many false lights may deceive us, so many illusions may seduce us, so many storms may alarm us, and, above all, says the Scripture, our views are so short-sighted, "our thoughts are so full of fear, and our counsels are so uncertain" (Wisd. ix. 14), even with an upright conscience, and a sincere love of the truth, we are not safe either from the danger of errors, or from the anguish of doubt, or from the burden of embarrassment. Now, in order that we may avoid all these evils, counsel is often necessary, and often it is sufficient. It is in this sense that the Holy Spirit tells us : "Do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou has done" (Eccles. xxxii. 24). There is in this advice

so much security, that we may find in it a precious element of happiness. Also the wise man tells us, that as "ointment and perfumes rejoice the heart, so the good counsels of a friend are sweet to the soul" (Prov. xxvii. 9). It follows that one of the best and most blessed works of mercy is the almsgiving of counsel; and what makes a true friend so great a treasure, is that he becomes officially a faithful counsellor.

The incomparable Friend, the One whom we may well call our only Friend, so much does He surpass all others, Jesus, coming into the world, and holding commerce with man, could He fail to give us counsels? Certainly, He gives us laws. God "has appointed me king over Sion, His holy mountain." He means to say, over His Church, and through her, over the entire world, "preaching His commandments" (Ps. ii. 6). First of all, He is a Sovereign, and claims to found a kingdom. The Gospel is only the announcement and the constitution of the reign of God. The religion of Jesus, doubtless, is called the new law, the law of grace, the law of love and liberty; but it is a true law, founded on true and just rights, emanating from a true Sovereignty, making known the wills of a Master, acquainting His true subjects with it, and binding them all, without exception, by the strongest moral obligation. The glory of Jesus Christ demanded that it should be thus, and our weakness even more than His glory. For who does not see that this law is a star of the greatest brilliancy, which enlightens our way, our principal strength against ourselves, and our chief buckler against so many enemies, who are in league to destroy us? The more so, as, like every word of God, this law is a two-edged sword, capable of bringing those to a decision by the dread of the chastisements which it

threatens, whom it has not vanquished by its own beauty, or at least by the attractions of its marvellous rewards. There are, then, in the Gospel formal precepts; and those are smitten with blindness, if they are not guilty of an impudent falsehood, who will only see in Christianity a mere proposal made by God to His creatures, or an affair of sentiment, able indeed to interest the heart, but not reaching to the conscience. Man can assuredly choose, and during his life follow, the road which he prefers; but the choice, which we can make between obedience and rebellion, is the only alternative left us either to save or to destroy ourselves, and besides this alternative, there is no other.

The religion, then, of Jesus Christ contains precepts: and that it is founded upon them, we can see at a first glance. But is this all; and could not Jesus give us also counsels? Could He ever fail to give us such counsels? You know the seven names of that Divine Spirit Who reposes on the Saviour, that is to say, Who dwells substantially in Him, and takes in Him an infinite complacency. One of these names is the Spirit of Counsel. When, after His resurrection, and in virtue of His Blessed Passion, our Lord sheds forth in us this Spirit of which He is full, He gives it us also as the Spirit of Counsel. The Scripture teaches us this when it tells us that one of the privileges of the wise man (that is, of him who believes) is to be directed in his counsel in the most difficult ways, and in the most perplexing affairs; in a word, in all the most delicate and the most important circumstances of his life (Eccl. xxxix. 10). The Spirit of Jesus counsels us precisely in this matter as He instructs us, that is to say, within us, in the interior of our heart, by the touches of His grace, and by what

St. John calls His "unction": "You have no need," he says, "that any man teach you; but as His unction teacheth you all things, and is truth, and no lie" (1 St. John ii. 27). This is much, but being what we are—I mean, having still in us those shadows, and those infirmities which even the state of grace, and even an advanced sanctity leave within us—will this be all we want? and, consequently, ought Jesus, or could He even, stop short there in the work of the formation of our souls, and of the direction of our life?

There is always a sort of rashness in asking if God can or cannot do a particular thing, since, with the exception of what is wicked or absurd, it is evident that God can do all things; and far from being in a position to judge, if a particular act is necessary in His regard, we are hardly capable of appreciating afterwards the suitableness of what He does. In reality, the right here is the fact itself, or, at least, the fact is the proof and the expression of the right. This is the reason why, in sacred science, once the Divine fact is ascertained, the best course is, in general, to make this fact the foundation and the principle of all our reasoning. Besides that, such a course seems more respectful, it is manifestly more wise.

The truth is, then, that besides the laws which He has laid down for us, Jesus Christ has given us, here below, counsels also. Everywhere in the Gospel, by the side of the expressions of His Divine and absolute will which our Lord prescribes, there are practical thoughts which He announces, and, as it were, moral processes which He indicates, almost always accompanying them with exhortations which He makes us. Now, it is precisely this difference which constitutes the distinction between a counsel and a precept: the one comes from

authority, the other from wisdom ; the one is the work of the will, the other the fruit of the intelligence ; and if, in certain respects, the will appears to unite itself with the intelligence, it is only an incipient and an imperfect will, which is inclined to, but does not positively, will—a will, in fine, which stops at the desire, and does not proceed as far as, to order.* Moreover, while the precept obliges, and we cannot violate it without sin, the counsel leaves us free. There can be no doubt that we must esteem and respect it. We are bound to believe and confess that all the counsels are good, wise, and most salutary for mankind. Whoever thinks or speaks ill of them (as it happens, alas ! so often in the world), cites the judgment of God at the bar of his own, which is a grave insolence ; and moreover, he condemns it, which is the very height of outrage and absurdity.† But as to regulating our life on the advice of this Heavenly Counsellor, it is incontestably praiseworthy to do so ; whoever does so, certainly merits, and will infallibly receive, a more ample recompense, without speaking of the many advantages which it ensures us on earth ; but whoever does not follow the counsels, does not commit any fault in so doing, neither will he find his judge more severe, nor will he have a heavier account to render for this omission.‡

* Cfr. Suarez. *De Virtute et Statu Religionis*, Vol. iii., book i., ch. 8.

† In the eighth book of his admirable treatise on the Love of God, St. Francis of Sales has written an entire chapter with this title : “That the Contempt of the Evangelic Counsels is a Great Sin.” He then declares that this contempt is an insupportable impiety, a heresy, a horrible blasphemy and irreverence.

‡ *Ubi præceptum datur, ibi necessitas est servientis ; ubi consilium, ibi offerentis arbitrium.*—S. Hieron. *Epist. xxii. ad Eustoch.*

What admirable discretion on the part of God ; and with what reverence He treats His creatures ! Certainly, in strict justice, He could exact of us everything, I mean everything that is possible, for except requiring the impossible, where do His rights stop ? He could, at least, demand of us more than He exacts ; but He limits Himself to what is indispensable. Thus, we must, by all means, arrive at our last end ; and make use of the means without which we cannot reach it : the precepts aim at this.* When it is a question whether the children are to live or to die, the father's love is not satisfied, till he has secured to their interest, both the sovereignty which commands, the justice which controls, and the power which punishes. But as to the rest, that is to say, as to the employment of such or such a means which, rendering from the outset the success more certain, makes it more expeditious and far more magnificent, this is only the matter of a counsel, and God leaves it to our liberty. You keep the law, you do well, you will have eternal life ; but if you would be perfect, if you would have the hundredfold, to sit one day upon a throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and to sing on high a canticle unknown to others, go, sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, remain a virgin, and follow close after Me. What I counsel you to do, is, without doubt, the better course ; happy are you if you comprehend what to say ; still more happy if I persuade you to do what I

Consilium qui libenter audierit et fecerit majorem habebit gloriam ; qui verò præceptum non impleverit, nisi pœnitentiam egerit, non evadet pœnam.—S. August. Serm. lxi. Cfr. S. Thom. Summ. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. cvi., art. 4 ; et Suarez, ubi suprà, dicentem : *Consilium, qua tale, nullam obligationem inducit, nec etiam sub veniali : consentiunt omnes moderni Theologi.*

* St. Thom. *loc. cit.*

recommend. However, if an ordinary sanctity decidedly suits you better, keep within the limits of its accomplishment ; you do not incur any disfavour in My sight.

This is the Gospel, and the proper character of the New Covenant. Grace is already in the law, for He Who establishes the law, merits for us, and always gives us, the grace to accomplish it. Moreover, this law, so sweet and made so easy of accomplishment, truly abounds with attractions (Ps. xviii. 8) ; it is quite enough for this that it is Jesus Who announces it, that it is to Him that it unites us, and that it is He Himself Who observed it the first. But beyond the law, there opens out a region more lofty, where the air is more pure, which is also more luminous and more fertile ; a country which is kept in reserve, though open, where love alone speaks and in its own name, where love addresses those only who love, and receives no other gifts than those which love bestows spontaneously. The creature is there left so much her own mistress, that she can in giving herself there, become like a shadow of God's grace, giving, even as He gives. Do you think this commerce between God and man permissible, worthy of the one, honourable to the other ? It is that on which the counsels are founded. Hence the reason they are so entirely admissible in this new state of Religion where the servants of God are His children, "who do not receive the spirit of bondage again in fear, but the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby they cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). And it is because we had already had in view this suitableness of relationship, that we ventured to ask, if in the economy which He instituted, our Lord could avoid adding the counsel to the precept ; and if, in the Gospel, many virtuous works ought not to be simply made matters of

counsel, especially the most virtuous, and those which God accepts far beyond all the rest. Yes; between us and that God Who died to make us live, and Who feeds us every day with His own immolated Flesh, it is fitting that the heart, the free movement of the heart—in a word, that grace should occupy the foremost place; the more so, because God thus asking less, obtains more, and acting less as Master, He is incomparably better served.

Happy, then, I repeat it, happy are those who listen to these holy counsels! All in truth hear them, for God, speaking by Jesus Christ, gives them in the presence of multitudes; but all do not lay hold of them, so that they are themselves laid hold of, and persuaded to follow them. A special grace is wanted for this (St. Matt. xix. 11), and the Word knocking at the door of the soul, the Holy Spirit comes to open it, and finishes the work that the Word has begun. The number is great, without doubt, of those who receive this grace, and do not correspond with it; but all those who give themselves to the counsels of Jesus, receive this grace, and only surrender themselves because they have received it. They have no right to boast of it, but they have right to rejoice in it! For is there any gift to be compared with that which becomes the principle of so eminent a life, by opening the source of virtues which are so rare.

Particular counsels abound in Christian morality: there are a thousand counsels for one precept, since there are so many ways, some more perfect than others, of accomplishing that which is commanded. Each virtue has, for the same reason, its retinue of counsels. Between the virtue of obligation which exempts the soul from the

opposite sin, and the virtue which is heroic, such as it is in the Saints, how many degrees are there, that the liberty of man may surmount, and that God does in no way command.* Nevertheless there is a unanimity of opinion, and the Gospel bids us believe, that Jesus Christ gives us three principal counsels, and that, sanctifying most efficaciously the life of those who embrace them, these counsels place in a state of perfection those who bind themselves to them by vow. The reason of these three counsels is at once evident and profound.

All our life consists in love. In giving us our life, the first love, which is God, destines for us His own; and the only condition which He lays down about it, is that our love should answer to His own. Knowledge itself is only with a view to love: if it does not vent itself in love, it is only an abortion, and its sap thus checked, can destroy that to which it ought to give life. The soul, which has the most life in it before God here below, is that which loves most, and which consequently best deserves the possession on high of the object which it loves. But if love is life, it is necessarily also law, for law is only the Divine prescription of life, and this is why we cannot violate the law without the penalty of death. If, then, as we have already said, the three Evangelic counsels regard the law, and only prepare the soul the better to accomplish it, it is a necessary consequence, that they refer also to love, which is the law at its height, and in its fulness.

Now, it is easy to see that all three tend to love, serve, and profit it. They heal the evil which kills love, they burst all the bonds which fetter it, and, protecting its integrity and aiding its progress, they finally ensure its

* Cfr. Suarez., *loc. cit.* chap. 8.

triumph. We can only point out these things; but, as we shall meditate on them hereafter and unfold the precious graces which each of them contains, we shall only give now a general outline of a picture, all of whose parts will be stated and explained elsewhere.*

The evil which is the destruction of our love, we have told you, is called concupiscence, and this concupiscence is threefold. Now, each of the evangelical counsels is a divine remedy, which has the power to cure one of these concupiscences. The concupiscence of the eyes yields to poverty, that of the flesh to chastity, and pride dies under the blow struck by obedience. Whosoever follows these counsels, especially if he has made a vow to follow them always, preserves in himself the life of love, by destroying in their principle all those powers which are contrary to it.

But, further, the counsels not only make this love to live in us, but they also make it free. Of itself, love tends upwards: God is its centre, its focus, its last end; it goes God-ward by its own proper movement, and sometimes without its own knowledge. But often here below it finds itself kept back, and hence that violence of which St. Paul speaks, which makes it utter in us "unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26). Even after the ignoble chain of sin has been broken by grace, it must naturally be subject to that slavish bond which obliges it to serve the necessities of earth—for instance, that great care we feel about temporal things, such as the anxiety which is felt to make a fortune, to keep it, and to administer it. Then that other still greater care about persons, especially that caused by our relations: the husband, to whom by marriage they have given their life

* 1 Cfr. St. Thom. Summ. contra Gentes, Lib. iii. cap. 130 et 133.

and engaged their heart ; the children they have in charge—a charge which is sweet in many respects, and more noble than sweet, but a charge very real and sometimes overwhelming ; in a word, the care of which each one finds the source in himself, the care caused by the difficulty of discerning his right course, and of walking in it always straight, of making a position for himself, and of keeping it ; of deciding always by himself his own course, and of journeying on incessantly under the weight of a grave and fearful responsibility.

Doubtless (we must say it for the honour of God and the consolation of souls), even with these trammels, love can live and work. The grace of Jesus Christ is strong, supple, various, universal—it adapts itself to all approved states of life. Then for the rich there is almsgiving, liberality, economy, which, if it is Christian, supposes so many virtues. There is also the spirit of poverty, which the Saints have known how to observe even in courts and in the throne.

Without speaking of the chastity which belongs to these states, the married have at hand, and by the very nature and duties of their condition, a thousand sources, full of life, inexhaustible, unavoidable, of devotedness, of abnegation, and immolation. And as to those who remain their own masters, what occasions spring up every day under their feet of having recourse to God, of trusting in Him, and of abandoning themselves to His holy Providence ; of acting with reflection and prudence ; of being strong, constant, magnanimous. All this is a profit to love.

Yet it is not necessary to make a profound study of man or of the world in order to understand that such virtues, compelled to live in constant struggles, and

always obliged to triumph over the surroundings of opposite vices, must be exceedingly rare ; and that, consequently, in breaking so many bonds which deplorably and almost fatally enslave the greater part of the people of the world, the evangelical counsels are a chosen portion for the soul ; and, while giving it a priceless liberty, they ensure to its love marvellous facilities, and hence marvellous success.

And it is precisely by these means that they procure its triumph ; for, by right, immediately love is free it is master : only let obstacles be removed, and it spreads itself of its own nature and fills all things. The soul which has vowed the counsels is occupied only with God, as saith the Scripture (Ps. xlv. 11). It is placed in a state of being all, to One alone, of tending to Him, consequently, with all its strength, of consecrating to Him, all its time, of spending all its life in His service. What, then, hinders this soul from becoming His conquest and His prey ?—His prey, since He is “a consuming fire” (Heb. xii. 39) ; His conquest, since He is a Sovereign by nature, and a Conqueror by will.

We can form some idea of the loving liberty which the grace of the Immaculate Conception gave to the soul of the Blessed Virgin : I mean to the love which God had for her and also to the love she rendered Him. Nothing was able to contradict, or retard, or trouble either that loving attention on the part of God, or that correspondence on hers ; that love, in fine, which each instant precipitated them one towards the other and joined them in a perfect union : all went straight, all went quickly, with a strength, a certainty, a simplicity, a sweetness, a plenitude, that surpasses all expression. Now, the vows which establish the soul in holy evangelical poverty have

analogous effects. They replace it as far as may be in a sort of original justice ; and hence it is precisely that the religious profession is called a second baptism. The soul is, then, born anew ; and the first event of the new history, which dates from this second birth, is the inauguration of the complete reign of God. We must, then, understand literally what our Lord says of the eight beatitudes, which evidently refer to these three great counsels, and are summed up in them. Who-soever pledges himself always to follow them finds himself on the way to his own true happiness by taking the royal road of perfection and of sanctity.

Such—in part, at least—are the reasons of the holy counsels God has given us in the law of grace, and such is their compass. It was needful to show you this, that in commencing to study them one by one in their particular form, you might already have a true and high idea of them, and that you might therefore give to this study a more reverential and a more zealous attention.

We may now without further delay approach the question of this blessed voluntary poverty, which is the beginning of the Religious state in all those who make the vow of it. We shall explain, then, first of all, in what Religious poverty consists—what are the obligations it imposes ; then the sentiments it inspires, the direction it gives to the conduct, and the general character it impresses on the life : so that, having first understood what are in its eyes the necessities of life, you will see immediately afterwards the degrees by which it ought to ascend to arrive at its perfection, and to make us perfect ourselves. But as this is so important a matter as to be fundamental,—as we cannot attach to it the hearts, which, by nature, so often find themselves opposed to

it,—we shall, in the second place, unfold to you the numerous and powerful motives which should influence and induce you to practise always and at all costs, this indispensable virtue.

I.

Religious poverty consists in depriving yourself of riches, and detaching yourself from them, for the love of the eternal wealth which is God Himself.

We are speaking of privation. Every Christian ought to be poor, in a certain sense, and in a certain measure. Jesus said : “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven” (St. Matt. xix. 24); and He said, still more formally, that “everyone that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple” (St. Luke xiv. 33). But in order to pay the debt of this necessary renouncement, and to participate, in the requisite degree, in the holy poverty of Jesus, it is sufficient to keep the heart free in the midst of riches (Ps. lxi. 11); to use this world, as if you used it not (1 Cor. xii. 30); and, as Venerable Bede observes, after St. Augustine : “To possess the goods of this world without being possessed by them, and being riveted to the earth.”* This poverty is of precept. The counsel goes further, and he who follows it does more. “If thou wilt be perfect,” said our Saviour, “go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor” (St. Matt. xix. 21). He who obeys this counsel, strips himself, and remains bereft of all. Such is the Religious; and it is this mark as to the exterior, which distinguishes him from the Christian of the world. But

* Sic tenere omnia quæ in mundo sunt, ut per ea non teneantur in hoc mundo.—Ven. Beda ex S. August. in Epist. ad Corinth.

it is evident that God wishes him to be, first of all and interiorly, detached from all the property which he abandons. Let the hand be empty of money—yes; but especially let the heart be free from avarice. God is not satisfied with mere appearances, and His Kingdom is in souls.

It is the vow of poverty which strips Religious; it is the virtue of poverty which detaches him: by which we may see that, having one and the same object, the vow and the virtue are, however, two very different things. The virtue is the end of the vow; the vow is only the means of exercising the virtue more perfectly. The virtue is the sanctuary; the vow is only the rampart which surrounds and protects it. The virtue has a far wider range than the vow. Its field is vast, and it tends to the highest perfection. On the contrary, the vow, as such, remains exclusively in the sphere of obligation. Not that we are obliged to make it, as we have already told you; but after we have made it, it obliges us to keep it. We may wound the virtue without violating the vow which corresponds to it; but if we fail as to the vow, it is a necessary consequence that we also wound the virtue. Finally, the vow is only for earth; the virtue remains for ever. Such is the order: every good act attaches itself to a particular virtue; all virtue is bound to love; and love is consummated and consummates us in God.

This is why we have taken care to say, that if the Religious deprives himself of all temporal goods and detaches himself from them, this ought to be from love to the goods that are eternal. To throw gold to beggars from indifference or vainglory, to be attached to poverty, or even to reduce oneself to it by a proud contempt of riches, or to acquire a name, or from attachment to a

system, or from a natural mania, so foolish that we might think it impossible—this is in no way to embrace the poverty of Jesus Christ. It is very often to sin; and if it happens that it is not positively sin, it is, at least, to perform an act which is null and void, regarded in the light of moral perfection and salvation. “Give to the poor,” said the Master, “then return, and follow Me” (St. Mark x. 21); thus showing for what purpose you have sacrificed all. Leave thy fields, thy fortune, and the rest, but “for My Name’s sake” (St. Matt. xix. 29). This is the principal thing, and which, giving to the action its Christian character, ensures to it its heavenly value.

It is, then, in view of God, in view of the relations, present and future, of his soul with God, that the Religious deprives himself and detaches himself; and the proper object of this double deprivation and detachment, exterior and interior, is, I repeat, all that is comprised under the name of riches. Some explanations are necessary here.

There are several degrees of Religious poverty, and these different degrees give rise to different vows. Besides that, in several congregations, only temporary vows are made; even in the institutions where the vows are perpetual, these vows, similar as to their duration, are not always of the same extent. The rules and the constitutions of each order or congregation, fix precisely the degree in which the Religious who enters it, is to practise this self-deprivation. The Church approves all these degrees, because they are all holy, sanctifying, and certainly comprised in the counsel given by our Lord. The least among them places man in a state incomparably more elevated than that of proprietors, whoever they may be,

even if they gave prodigious alms. St. Thomas teaches and proves this.* However, it is clear that the Church keeps its highest esteem, its tenderest affection, and without any doubt, also its greatest graces, for the vows which establish man in a more radical deprivation, and consequently in a stricter poverty.

The most perfect of these vows is that by which the Religious renounces absolutely the right of possessing anything whatever. By this vow the professed Religious is rendered unable to receive, to acquire, to claim, to inherit, to bequeath, to sell, to lend, to give—to perform, in fine, any act appertaining to property or possession, as if he had already quitted this world. Though, indeed, the civil law no longer recognised at its tribunal this incapacity of the Religious, still as it never had the right itself of making this regulation, so neither has it the right of hindering its execution. It is an essentially spiritual act, and on this title only the vow is authorised by God and by His Holy Church. Doubtless, the vow of which we are speaking has certain effects in the temporal order; but these effects participate in the act which produces them, and borrow from it their moral character. “If the root is holy, the branches are also holy,” says St. Paul (Rom. xi. 16). In short, the Church alone having knowledge of the vow, can alone legitimately know the incapacity which results from it; and if, as it is evident (and it is her custom, or rather, her secular legislation), she accepts this view of an absolute deprivation, it is enough to constitute its reality before God, and to render it obligatory on the conscience.

* He says that the merit of a Religious, as to almsgiving, surpasses that of seculars, as that which is universal surpasses in extent that which is particular, and as the holocaust surpasses other sacrifices.

The least perfect of the vows of poverty is that which, preserving the radical possession of his property, and even the right of disposing of it, the Religious only renounces the right of disposing of it himself. He truly retains the possession of his fortune, but he becomes dependent as to the use to be made of it. However limited the range of such a vow may be, as it manifestly restrains the natural exercise of the right of proprietorship (which leaves one free to dispose of his property as he likes), it implies a true immolation; it constitutes a sort of poverty, which no law exacts, and which, therefore, is a pure matter of counsel; and hence it is that it is sufficient to place us in the Religious state.

Now, independently of all application that can be made of general principles to any Religious institute, the fundamental rule here is, that we sin against the vow every time, that by any exterior or interior act, we depart from the measure of privation or of dependence, to which we had the intention of submitting, in the community to which we have bound ourselves by vow.

If after this we must say something more particularly on the different duties which result from these different vows, and especially on these two extremes, to which the rest may easily be attached, the following are the rules which are universally laid down, and which are most sure. First, we see at once in what consists the practice of the lowest vow of poverty. He who makes this vow, ought not, without the consent of his Superior, either to dispose, in fact or in intention, of property he had not disposed of before his profession. If the opportunity offers of making use, in fact, of the property, the right over which he had preserved, let him make known his thoughts, let him declare, in case of need, his wishes, let him support

them with good reasons, and plead discreetly and humbly the cause which he thinks to be the more correct and the better one ; but let him not express formally his own judgment in the matter, and especially let him not decide anything of his own will. Besides we think we are speaking according to God to those who live under this regimen in telling them : since the imperfection of your vow renders you spiritually less rich, make up for this deficiency on the side of virtue. As to right, you are less deprived ; therefore, be more detached. Think so much the less of your property, in proportion as you have the right over it ; and when the moment comes for you to occupy yourself about it, become the more docile to the decisions of Superiors, as they have less liberty to intimate them to you.

But if you have vowed total poverty, remember, that then, by the grace of God, you do not possess anything in the world. It is the sentiment of all the Fathers ; and whatever are your rules, I think that this text contains their most express declaration, namely, *Nothing belongs to you as your own* ;* neither your patrimony, nor your dowry, nor the property of the community, nor whatever objects the community may give you for your use : for example, neither your habit, nor your breviary, nor any other books, nor the furniture of your cell, nor your pictures, nor your relics, nor a pin, nor a morsel of thread, not even the bread you eat, as long as you have not eaten it. Of the morsel of bread which is given him, the mendicant can do what he wills ; he can, at his own will, keep it or throw it away, give it, or sell it ; you have

* See the Rules of St. Basil, of Saints Augustine, Benedict, Albert of Carmel, of St. Francis of Assissium, of St. Francis of Sales, the Constitutions of St. Teresa, &c.

not that right. You cannot lawfully put a morsel of this bread to any other use than that for which it was given you. So far as you do not make use of any part of it, that portion remains the property of another: by all which, you are poorer than the poor themselves. And wonderfully so, since, far from possessing any outward thing, "the Religious," say the admirable St. Benedict, "is not really a proprietor of his own body, or of his own will."*

If then, without the permission, either expressed or wisely presumed, of your Superior, you appropriate to yourself anything whatever, either what belongs to the community, or that does not belong to it, even were it what did not belong to anyone, as an object which was found and not claimed; if, always without an explicit or implicit permission, you receive anything whatever as a gift, or a loan; or if you yourselves give, lend, exchange, alienate an object, though it be ordinarily given you for your own use; or if by your own fault, you lose or spoil this object given for your own use, when especially it is officially confided to your keeping,—you cease to be despoiled and detached, and you sin against the vow. And further, if, without disposing in any way of anything, you use it with that inward affection for it, which excludes the idea of its being common property, and which affection shows itself naturally, by the addition to the name of the thing of the possessive pronoun *mine*, you also sin.

A mere regret for having made the vow of total poverty, if it is voluntary, the simple desire consented to, of being in any way a proprietor, would be a sin of the same kind. You know well that the Christian law is in a marked

* Quibus nec corpora sua, nec voluntates licet habere in propriâ protestate.—Reg., ch. xxxii.

way, interior, and that God says to all, as to everything which we are forbidden to have, "Thou shalt not covet." Doubtless, if this thought, this desire, this regret, pass from the heart to the lips, the fault is more considerable ; and if the voice which issues from the lips is heard, there is added to the proper malice of the act, the still graver sin of scandal. But, even when kept in the secret of the soul, such acts are opposed to the vow, and thence constitute grave faults. Understand, however, that to go against the vow, every exterior or interior act of propriety, is not a mortal sin. Here, as everywhere, to commit such a sin, there must be a full consent, and gravity in the matter. Thus, all things being otherwise equal, he who gets possession of an object, only to make use of it, does not sin as he would do, if he took it to appropriate it to himself. He who appropriates anything to his own use, which is necessary, does not commit the same fault as he who makes his own, something which is superfluous. He who gives or lends to an extern, is more culpable than he who lends or gives to a member of the community. It is a rule universally received, that what, in a matter of theft, would constitute an appropriation which would be mortal sin, would be sufficient, in Religious, if one took it without authorisation, to constitute a sin equally mortal. Take into account also, that though such and such a rule in which poverty is prescribed, does not of itself oblige under pain of sin, yet he who is wanting in the poverty it prescribes, commits a very real sin : not indeed, you understand, on account of the rule, but on account of the vow by which you are bound.* If it happened that

* See Rodrig. on Christian Perfection, ch. 10. See also on all these matters the excellent Treatise on the Religious State, by P. Gautrelet.

a Religious rule commended a certain point of morality, already appertaining to the natural, or Divine, or ecclesiastical law, is it not true, that we cannot be wanting in that point without sin ; not, we add once more, by reason of the rule considered in itself, but on account of the law of which it has been rightly judged that the rule will remind us ? It is the same for all the points of the rule to which the vow binds you. And I add, in conclusion, that being more or less grievous, every sin against the vow is a manifold one, implying, besides the fault against the virtue of poverty, a disobedience, an injustice, and in consequence of the violation of the vow, a sin against religion, and a true sacrilege. It is to this point, that the vow of poverty divests him who pronounces it.

But we have told you already, the vow is only for the virtue : the vow is only a rampart, and a guardian ; the virtue is the main and the fundamental matter, which establishes the true state of the soul, and is the foundation of its merit. Now, this virtue of poverty has not sufficient life in the soul, if you only hinder its death ; it should have sufficient energy of life to grow and to yield fruit. To prevent this death in the soul of the virtue of poverty, it is enough that you are detached from that of which the vow strips you, as least, so as not to violate it gravely ; but this is not enough to give this virtue a full and perfect life. By what progress is it, then, that Religious poverty attains its perfection, and what does it inspire those to do, who listen to it ?

First, it inspires them to retrench all that is superfluous ; I say, to retrench the use of superfluous things, and the superfluous use of things. Superfluity means, as the word indicates, that which is not necessary. And when we speak of what is necessary, we do not mean, you

understand, what is strictly required in order not to die with cold, with thirst, or with hunger ; we mean, what is fitting to the Religious state. Thus understood, this necessity is evidently relative to the rule which is embraced, to its employments, to the state of the health, also to the particular wants of each, of which Superiors are the judges. Now, all that goes beyond this, is justly, that superfluity which must, with fidelity and generosity, be retrenched.

Take the holy poverty of Jesus as your guiding light ; with its help, consider what are your habits. See if in the things which you make use of, in those you demand, whether for yourselves, or for your occupations, in those things also that you desire, there is nothing which you can really do without. What is most comfortable, is a superfluity, when the least comfortable is sufficient ; the new is a superfluity, when the old will do as well ; that which may be of service to-morrow, is a superfluity to-day, since we do not want it till to-morrow. Alleviation is a superfluity, when with ordinary courage we can bear our pain. O God ! what illusions are there in this matter ! What pretexts for asking ! What industry to obtain what we ask ! What sophisms for keeping what we have ! For one Religious, who is afraid of the superfluous, are there not a hundred who are seduced by it ?

Doubtless, there ought to be no excess in anything ; and the poverty which has a dread of imaginary wants has for her sister the simplicity which frankly makes known the wants that are real. But who does not know, in this matter of one's own interests, how blind, partial, and exacting we are. When this thought comes into your mind, that this or that thing is necessary for you, first of all distrust yourselves, take time to reflect—time

proportioned to the urgency of the want, to the vivacity of the desire, which this want has occasioned, to the importance of the object which would satisfy it, to the difficulty there is of procuring it for you, and the effect which the concession of what you want would have upon the Sisters. Then, remaining in peace, and disposed rather to believe your Superiors than yourself ; submit in advance to their reply ; and if this reply is a refusal, supposing that you have not the virtue of rejoicing at it, have at least the virtue of continuing tranquil and resigned.

The great secret in this matter, the fundamental, universal, infallible remedy, is to live the common life, the life in community. Love the life in common ; love the common food, the common habit, the books, the instruments of labour, the usages, except in particular cases left to the judgment of Superiors ; love the spiritual helps you have in common with the rest. I know the liberty which the Church gives in this matter : God forbid that I should speak evil of it, and especially that I should restrain it. This liberty is sacred, it is indispensable. "All things are lawful for me," said St. Paul, "but all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. vi. 12) ; and I am speaking to you also, I am sure, in the spirit of the Holy Church, when I say to you : even in your spiritual helps, love, and in every possible manner prefer, what is common. O, excellent degree of poverty that thus subjects a Religious to the community life alone ! By this means the superfluous finds itself cut off at a single blow ; and the spirit of ownership is nailed on the Cross, all illusion rendered impossible, and self-love disconcerted. And the advantages of such conduct are so much the greater, as it secures not only the well-being

of the individual, but also the general good. If, however, among objects that are in common, there is, as will be almost inevitably the case, some inequality—as, for example, a habit which is more worn, coarser food, a picture less pretty or less touching, a cell less agreeable or even less healthy, and which one or other of the Sisters must necessarily occupy, will poverty make them choose it? No; for the poor have no choice: it takes what is given it. But this blessed virtue will incline your heart to prefer what is the least, and perhaps to ask of God that it may be assigned to you; and if it is precisely the least that is given to you, it will make you regard this gift as a grace: you will give thanks to God for it, and you will rejoice at it as a most happy event.

Its great object being thus to retrench all superfluity, Religious poverty enables us further to love the temporary privation of even what is necessary. Is this, in practice, a case likely to occur? Jesus said to His apostles: “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, did you want anything?” (St. Luke xxii. 35); and you, ever since you have entered Religion, have you wanted anything? Perhaps your monastery has a revenue—a sure income, and more than sufficient for your daily wants. If so, what want have you not had supplied? or, if your convent has no revenue—or, if having one, it is not sufficient (so that you have something to hope for from the goodness of Divine Providence)—in what has Divine Providence disappointed your faith? St. Teresa wrote: “The less we have, the less anxious I am; and our Lord knows very well that I am more troubled when the alms are beyond our necessities, than when we have some need of them. But I cannot say that we have been in any want, so prompt is our adorable

Master in coming to our help.”* What house will not say the same—at least, if it is faithful to the spirit of poverty; without which, this admirable Saint says, that one forfeits all right to any existence, and one is exposed to die of hunger. “I have not seen the just forsaken,” saith the Royal Prophet, “nor his seed begging their bread” (Ps. xxxvi. 25). Who has seen the poor of Jesus Christ wanting theirs?

Yet God has tried, and may again try, your confidence, and to excite you to pray, may appear deaf, and delay His assistance. Saint Teresa expected it herself, when she wrote in her “Constitutions:” “There should be no hour appointed for the dinner-time, because the dinner-hour is when there will be enough to eat;”† and even under a mitigated rule, are there not a thousand accidents possible, without speaking of forgetfulnesses, which occasion for the moment real privations? Ah! what is this, I ask you, in comparison with the condition of those who, without having made a vow of poverty, are obliged to practise it perforce? Where is the poor man in the world who does not often want bread to feed him, clothing to cover him, a fire to warm him, a time of relaxation in his fatigues, doctors and remedies in his sickness? What would be that Religious poverty, which, far from exposing one to want sometimes, would offer to him who vowed it more security and abundance than he would often have found in his own family? “To wish to be poor, and not to have its sufferings and its incommodities, is too great an ambition,” said St. Francis of Sales; “for it is to wish to have the honour of poverty and the advantages of riches;”‡ to which St. Teresa adds:

* Way of Perfection, ch. 2. † Constitut., ch. 4.

‡ Intro. to a Devout Life; Part iii., ch. 16.

“That it is truly to deceive the world.” Is there not someone among you who, first of all, deceiving herself on this point, thus deceives the world outside? “Alas!” says St. Vincent Ferrier, “there are many who are proud of the name of poverty; but oftentimes on what conditions?” On the condition that they should never want anything? They call themselves friends of poverty, and when the true friends of poverty present themselves—that is to say, hunger, and thirst, and indigence, and humiliation,—they flee from them as far as they can.”* Do not avoid these occasions. The less frequently they occur, the more fervently you should bless God when He permits them to happen to you, and the more zealous you should be to profit by them. You remember what Jesus said by the voice of the Royal Prophet: “I am poor and suffering” (Ps. lxxviii. 30). Let your poverty also be then, at least sometimes, painful to you.

But holy poverty detaches the Religious, even from the use of things which ordinarily we cannot do without. Patiently courageous, when in want, the Religious who is truly poor, remains free and indifferent in the use and enjoyment, even of abundance. Everything serves him, nothing enslaves him, whether what he has not, is given him, or what he has, is taken away from him. Whatever may be the disposition of events in his regard, or whatever may happen to himself, he murmurs not; he never utters a complaint. He would blush to spend his time and his thoughts to occupy himself with such nothings: his thoughts, which should be fixed on God; his time, a blessing which by vow belongs also to God. Yes; he would be ashamed of it! Besides, he is a thing given, alienated, sold, as St. John Climachus says.† What can

* De Vitâ Spirituali, cap. I.

† Scala. Grad. 3.

be asked of him, which he does not regard as already given in principle, and which he does not deliver then and there, as simply as the merchant delivers to the buyer the merchandise he pays for? He has not his heart attached either to his health, or to his natural talents, or to his own ways, or to his devotions, or much less to his employment. Though by having a larger fortune, or by more generous qualities, or by his more active labour, a Religious may have notably promoted the good of the community, he does not value himself the more for these services; nor does he claim, even interiorly, more consideration, or attention, or comfort, than the rest of the community. He is contented to have nothing at all. The sight of his privations, far from troubling him, gives him great joy. He repeats voluntarily and spontaneously the words of Jeremias—or rather, of Jesus: “I am a man that sees my poverty” (Lament. iii. 1); who regards it—that is, with tranquillity, who contemplates it with love, and who bears it, not only with patience, but also with thanksgiving. He sings with David: “I am alone and poor” (Ps. xxiv. 16). If he has only Him Who is all, what does it matter about the rest? The less he has of the rest, the more he is assured of having this all. So he is indifferent and content. Oh, the blessing of being truly poor! Oh, this good, this agreeable poverty! But if, for an instant, nature takes him by surprise; if a more frequent thought, a livelier sentiment, an anxious desire of having more, or a fear of not having it, should make him suspect some secret attachment, he hastens to confess it, and prays to be cured of it, by the object being taken away from him or refused him, which, by the anxiety it caused him, deprived God, perhaps, of some portion of his affections.

This true poverty in a Religious makes him careful. He manages with solicitude whatever is entrusted to him. It is not only as articles confided to him, that he regards them, but rather, and still more, as things that are holy. So it is not enough that he economises them, he treats them with respect and reverence. Not so much economical in this matter as he is religious, he treats the property of the community as the property of Jesus, and therefore handles it as he would handle the sacerdotal vestments, or the sacred vessels used in the holy sacrifice.

But, if he is in office, his carefulness is so much the greater ; I say, his carefulness, not his disquietude, much less his anxiety. Whatever happens, let him keep himself from uneasiness, let him endeavour to be faithful to his duties, to observe the spirit of his state, and thus abandon all the rest to the holy Providence of God. "God wishes that all should confide in him," says admirably St. Francis of Sales, "each according to his vocation. It is not required of a layman or a man of the world, that he should lean upon the Providence of God, in the manner that we ecclesiastics are bound to do, . . . nor are ecclesiastics obliged to hope in this same Divine Providence as Religious do."* And he shows how, in the case of Religious, this hope in God ought to mount up to the highest perfection. Thus said, thus acted, the holy foundress of the Sisters of the Saviour, Mother Mary of Jesus, who, though she had to provide for thirty houses of her Order, thus wrote : "I will not disquiet myself either about gold or silver ; I shall have them when I have need of them, that is quite certain. God is my friend, and my most faithful steward ; He

* *Lettres à la Communauté des Filles-Dieu de Paris, de l'Ordre de Fontevault.* — Lettre 45, Tome v., Edit. Migne.

gives us what we have need of. I do not fear anything, but a want of confidence.”* This should be, in fact, the great if not the only fear of a Superior, in these temporal matters.

If, with these dispositions, a Superior places all her trust in God, and leaves everything to His guidance, you will never see her manifest, in the necessary business of the house—I mean, in buying, in selling, in settling accounts, in fine, in the administration, and the disposition of the temporal affairs of the community,—you will never, I say, see her manifest the least spirit of covetousness, or avarice, or meanness. For first, it is evident, that every Superior should carefully procure for the Religious what is necessary. In the Holy Church of Jesus a Superior is also called a Shepherd; in the communities of women all Superioresses are called Mothers: this sufficiently shows their duty, and the spirit with which God wishes to see them animated. Let nothing then be given, but conformably to the rule, and suitable to a state of poverty; but what the rule permits, should be given with exactitude, and, I venture to say, with a discreet abundance, especially to the feeble and to the sick.

Is it necessary to speak here of almsgiving? Who are more called upon to practise this virtue, than they to whom God Himself has given so much, so continually, and often with such magnificent profusion? St. Paul directs Timothy to “charge the rich of this world . . . not to trust in the uncertainty of riches, . . . to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, that they may lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of the true life” (1 Tim. vi. 17). Let all Superiors of every

* Lettres de la Mère Marie de Jésus du Bourg, Tome ii.

rank meditate on these words ; assuredly to confide in God, is not to tempt God ; and if there is an earthly and a carnal prudence, there is also a prudence which is heavenly, and from which they ought never to depart ; let them hold for certain, that one of the most abundant sources of spiritual and even temporal blessings, is large and liberal almsgiving.

As to matters of business, properly so called, and as to every regular decision of Superiors touching the common property of the community, either with or without its counsel, are we to imagine, that because Superiors do not act personally for themselves, therefore, they should act with rigour, and become grasping? Would it not be shameful, that a man of the world, a tradesman, or it may be even a labourer, should find in a Religious, I do not say less uprightness and delicacy, God forbid, but less largeness of heart, and a spirit less accommodating and compliant than we find in people of the world? What is more opposite to the Gospel, and to the Religious spirit? Because each of the members of a community has made a vow of poverty, is the community, or rather are those who represent it, to be exonerated from having, and manifesting its virtue? They represent the community, it is true, and they defend its interests. But do not they also represent our Lord, and should they cease, even for one moment, to regard the interests of His glory? By taking no heed of this matter, a great evil may arise. Is it not a great evil, and the gravest evil, to hold monasteries in disesteem, and to expose to the contempt of the world what it is of the utmost importance that the world should respect and honour? For this liberality in almsgiving would oblige the world to respect the Church, of which, by their state, Religious are the

chosen part ; and to honour also Religion itself, of which they ought to be the witnesses, the apostles, the glory, and the living demonstration.

Careful in all things, and generous when it is fitting, the Religious, who is truly poor, is also laborious. He husbands the time, but he does not husband his own labour. Do not the poor work much, and is not their work often rough and hard ? Do they hamper themselves in their seasons of uneasiness and discomfort ? Do they seek repose when they are weak ? They support this necessity which presses them, and often without a murmur. Should Religious do less ? Have not the spirit of faith, the will of God, the rule, conscience, zeal for perfection, the love of Jesus Christ, their supporting power, as much so as necessity ? And yet, if you have the happiness of being contemplatives, beware of another excess, and never change into a profane workshop, a house vowed to prayer. The regular exercise of manual labour being finished, apply yourself tranquilly to the personal service of God, and wait for His succour. Holy tears fructify the earth as well as the sweat of the brow, and when the land remains sterile, prayer has the secret of making the manna descend from heaven.

What more shall I say ? The Religious, who is truly poor, is constant in his spirit of poverty ; and even in his sickness he is found ever like himself. The poor have their manner of bearing sickness ; it in no way resembles that of the rich. Never forget it in your infirmities. When sick, be content with little ; do not ask or desire to be cared for with too particular an attention, or to have extraordinary remedies. The more you dismiss the case of yourselves, the more will our Lord inspire

your Superiors to give you a scrupulous attention, and the more He will bless all they do to give you relief. Besides, it is not a question in religion of prolonging life at any price, but rather of procuring, at all risks, the perfection of the soul ; and I know of nothing which may better contribute to this perfection than to be faithful to the spirit of poverty, even when one is otherwise poor in all respects, and deprived of that natural animation which a good condition of the body gives for everything, even for virtue itself.

It is this sentiment that the virtue of poverty inspires with regard to all those good things we call riches, and which form the special and immediate field of its labours. But it has the quality of giving a most exquisite sense of that exceeding zeal with which the Holy Scriptures testify that God commands us to keep His precepts. "Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4). The room it leaves in the soul, by taking away every encumbrance, gives it that expansion which the Holy Spirit assures us, causes the heart to glow, and the feet to run. "I have run the way of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. cxviii. 32). So that inevitably it overpasses its own domain, and urges the soul to deprive herself (at first inwardly, and then outwardly, according as God gives the grace and the occasion) of all those other blessings, naturally so dear, which we call honour, esteem, credit, influence, affection, joy, and even knowledge ; not, certainly, that any of these are bad in themselves, and, as considered with regard to God, the future life, the supernatural interests of the soul and of souls ; nor does the spirit of poverty hinder a Religious from esteeming them, from desiring them, and consequently

from seeking them and from possessing them. But in so far as these good things are human, and regard the earth ; in so far as they can flatter and nourish the mere humanity ; in so far, for example, as this knowledge puffs up, makes a man illustrious, urges to vain researches, injures simplicity of heart, and troubles that limpid interior eye, which alone perceives the things of God ; in so far as this affection for creatures subjects the soul, distracts, preoccupies it ; in so far as this joy intoxicates, and arrests its progress ; in so far as this esteem, this credit, this success produce illusions, swell the heart, and incline it to lean upon itself ; in so far, to resume all in one word, as all this favours and nourishes that spirit of appropriation which is, as it were, the life of self-love, and consequently the obstacle to pure charity, and the fulness of the reign of God : in these respects it is, that the virtue of poverty disposes us, not to love them, to do without them, to reject them, to fly from them. It thus brings night over the whole sensible and lower world, and even over that part of the soul which has relation to it. The Religious who is truly poor says, then, as the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, "I am black" (Cant i. 4, 5). And it is this which makes the world, on regarding him, feel so alarmed, and so scandalised, complaining of him, though it does not despise him. But he can well add, "But I am beautiful;" and why? Because that which has discoloured his soul thus, and made it black, is that sun of the Divine Beauty of which it is for ever enamoured, and by whose side all else appears to it, and all is indeed, but darkness.

Besides, God Himself often increases this darkness, for He alone can truly finish the Divine work of this Heavenly virtue ; this is why He reserves to Himself to

put to it the finishing stroke, and generous souls know if He is sparing in this work. We have not, while in this world, the exact, and much less the complete, idea of that perfection of purity at which a soul must arrive in order that it should be fit for the beatific union—especially certain souls predestinated to a more elevated degree of union. It is the secret of purgatory : a very small number of Saints sometimes know something of it while here below. However this may be, this Divine purity cannot become, on earth, the state of a human soul except by means of successive deprivations—of deprivations of which that which results from the vow of poverty is only the shadow and the distant prelude ; of such deprivations, I mean, so painful and so inward, that the Holy Scripture compares them to the action of the sword and of fire ; but of a sword sharp, penetrating, irresistible, which goes, St. Paul says, “even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit” (Heb. iv. 12), and of a fire so intense and devouring, that the soul God throws into it, is, as it were, in a furnace : according to the Prophet Isaiah, “I have chosen thee in the furnace of poverty” (Isaias xlviii. 10). By these impoverishings, by these deprivations, God reduces the soul to such nudity, that if it did not preserve the sentiment of its own nothingness, it would seem to become a mere nothing. It is positively purgatory begun upon earth. We can form some idea of it by reading the recitals St. Gertrude has left us of her interior life.

Now, the virtue of poverty delivers the soul to these operations and maintains her in these states. It renders her entirely docile, it keeps her in confidence, it sinks her in humility, it clasps her in the strongest embraces of love. But in this degree, poverty is so sublime, and

its fruits become so Divine, that heaven alone is worthy of seeing them, as also that opulent and delicious life which we call life eternal, can alone reward its merits and pay it for its labours.

It remains to consider the many and powerful motives which should move you to the faithful, courageous, and perfect practice of this admirable virtue.

II.

We are speaking of motives which are at once many and powerful. The truth is, that when once we consider them in the light of God, they present themselves in crowds, and each motive is such as to be sufficient not only to compel the entire assent of the mind, but also to ravish the heart and permanently to regulate the conduct.

We will select six of these motives; and the first of all is the interest, the gravest interest, of the Monastery, which you have entered—that is to say, of the Order under whose standard you are to fight, and of the holy Religious family, of which you have the honour and the grace to be a member.

Certainly, after the three first precepts which regard God and His service, there is in the Divine law a great commandment: it is that of honouring our father and our mother; and if for every one that is well disposed there is a sacred duty, dear to the heart, and sweet in its performance: it is that of filial piety. Who can say to what point this duty obliges a nun in regard to religion, especially the religion she has selected as her own—that is to say, to her own congregation and to her own community? In fact, what does she not owe to it? what does she not receive from it

every day? and at what cost of sweat, of tears, often of blood, does she receive it? I do not speak of the Passion of Jesus, from the depths of which proceed at first all these holy families; nor of the compassion of Mary, who, in union with this Passion, has begotten them all. I speak of the passion of Founders and of Reformers; of their labours, of their penances, of their anguish, and of all that, from generation to generation, their disciples (who have themselves already become masters and ancestors) have accumulated, in addition to these treasures of charity; for communities live on the fruit of their first labours. "Living stones," said God to His people, "look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you are dug out. Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sara that bore you" (Isaias li. 1). Do you also turn over in your mind, meditate on the history of those to whom you owe your name, your rule, your spirit, in a word, your existence as Religious, and say if, whatever else you do, you acquit yourselves well of your duties towards them. Your community is, in a very real sense, your mother—a mother which, like that great Jerusalem on high, of which the Scripture speaks, has come down from heaven (Apoc. xxi. 2), impregnated with the paternity—that is to say, with the authority, with the fecundity, and with the holy tenderness of God, of Whom it is the expression and the organ. If filial piety is admissible anywhere, it is so here. Now, even before the obligation of honouring, of assisting, of serving such a mother, of labouring for her prosperity, and of rejoicing her heart, is it not true that there is the obligation of not compromising her interests, of not causing her the least injury, of not bringing any shame upon her, of not

overwhelming her with grief, of not bringing ruin upon her?

Now, let me tell you, first, that this is what is done—heedlessly, perhaps, and without any malice or wickedness—but truly done, and not without burdening themselves with a frightful responsibility, by all Religious who betray their duties on this point of poverty.

It is the doctrine of all theologians, and what all the Founders of Orders unanimously affirm, that poverty is the foundation and the root of the Religious life—"its wall of defence," says St. Ignatius.* History is at hand to show if they were deceived. Write the history of the poverty or of the riches of Convents, and you write the history of their progress or of their decline. Without any doubt, we have seen, and we may yet see again, Religious Institutes possessing, as such, considerable property. The pious works with which they are charged, and sometimes their special end—for instance, the education of the young—render these great possessions useful, and in a manner indispensable. But if the Religious life is maintained in these institutions, it is because the wisdom of rules, the vigour of discipline, and the perfection of obedience, render each Religious so much the poorer individually in affection, as the entire community is richer in its possessions.

What, then, does a nun do who, in her convent, is habitually unfaithful to holy poverty? She does what those troublesome worms, which annoy the agriculturist, do to the roots of plants. She devours the sap of that blessed, of that Divine tree, which for so many years has sheltered her under its branches, and nourished her with

* *Paupertas ut murus Religionis firmus diligenda.*—Constit. P. vi., c. 2.

its fruits ; she dries up its trunk, she labours to make it sterile, and thus she does the work of Satan. Relaxation, which is the spiritual ruin of convents, and which prepares their material ruin also, only arises from the relaxation of each member of the community. Now, it is by failing in the practice of poverty, that most commonly, this relaxation begins. Evil is contagious, and especially in this matter. Nature detained a captive in Religion, incessantly seeks pretexts for escaping from this restraint : now, what better pretexts can there be than examples, especially if they are given by the elder Sisters ? Certainly, the elder Sisters have in this matter a stricter obligation than their juniors. If they allege that by reason of their age they are more feeble, how easy is the reply : that being older, for this very reason they ought also to be more perfect.

Let each one, then, say to herself : the day when she commences to become negligent and lax in the practice of poverty, she exposes herself first to sin, and to sin against her vow ; for if the vow is made for the virtue, if it protects it, it is also true that in its turn the virtue guarantees the faithful observance of the vow. But further, and especially, she begins to be to her Convent, and in consequence, to the whole Order, a germ of pestilence and of death. “The asp of dissolution and of irregularity is not yet within your House,” wrote St. Francis of Sales to the Daughters of God at Paris ; “but take care of yourselves—these defects are its eggs. If you brood over them in your bosom, they will be hatched one day to your ruin and perdition, and you do not think of it.” And of what defects was there a question in this House, which in other respects was so virtuous and so well regulated, that the saint did not hesitate to call it *excellent* ? Of the de-

fects, touching poverty : “ It is Ishmael attacking Isaac,” continued he, in speaking of this disorder; “ drive him away—banish him. Let him be as little as you like, let him be as much a child as you please, let him be no bigger than an ant; but he is bad, he is good for nothing, he will ruin you, and he will damage your House as well.*

There is nothing, perhaps, on which the Founders insist more in their rules, in their constitutions, in their advice. No sooner is it a question of poverty, than we see these lambs, in their zealous anger, changed into lions. You know the terrible and solemn chastisement which Peter inflicted on Ananias; and this same punishment the Fathers of the Desert inflicted on every Religious that they found, at his death, guilty of appropriation, of possessing property. All the Fathers assembled round the bier, to cry aloud before it : “ Let thy money perish with thee;” and his burial was without honour.† This conduct has been consecrated by the Canon Law. When Saint Dominic was dying, he threatened with the malediction of God, and with his own, all those who should tarnish with the dust of earthly possessions the brightness of the poverty which ought to adorn the Order of Friar-Preachers.‡ Saint Vincent of Paul cursed one day, three times in succession, those of his company, who allowed themselves to be influenced by views of self-interest,§ St. Teresa, who

* Letter quoted above.

† S. Hieron. Epist xxii., ad Eustoch. S. Gregor. Magn. iv., Dialog. cap. 9.

‡ Ejus vita à Jordan. scripta. cap. xx. Et commentar. prævius : apud Bolland. T. I. August.

§ Sa Vie, par Abelly, Livre iii.

in other respects wishes for her daughters such a maternal government, ordains that if it is a question of poverty, they should be treated with rigour and severely punished.* "For the love of our Lord," she writes in her "Way of Perfection," "reflect that our arms are holy poverty. . . . Let our most cherished wish be, then, to preserve this poverty intact. Let everything correspond with our glorious motto, our dwellings, our habit, our desires, our words, and especially our thoughts. As long as you act thus, never fear that you will witness the ruin of the regularity which reigns in this House. . . . Take care especially not to raise magnificent buildings: I ask it, for the love of God, and by the precious Blood of our Lord. If that should happen, my conscientious wish is, that such buildings may fall down and perish on the very day they are completed."† Do not you think this is an important point on which those who were so enlightened and so charitable, unanimously pronounce such terrible anathemas? Who would like to expose themselves to the maledictions of the Saints?

A second and excellent motive which should inspire you with zeal for this virtue, is its great importance to your perfection, both moral and religious. Listen to the Master—that is to say, to the Eternal Wisdom, Who, in the excess of His mercy, is our Schoolmaster here below. Jesus opens His Mouth to instruct the multitudes on the mountain; He immediately speaks to them of our final Beatitude. It is His first lesson, because happiness is our first and our most essential want. First, then, revealing this splendid and fundamental fact of the identity of happiness and sanctity, He said, "Blessed are the poor

* Constitut. chap. 5.

† Way of Perfection, ch. 2.

in spirit" (St. Matt. v. 1). On this foundation He built up seven other Beatitudes, and by these degrees of ascension the soul mounts up even to that supreme height where we contemplate the Face of God (Ps. lxxxiii). But this first course or layer of poverty is a foundation, and sustains the whole edifice. We are to attach ourselves to heavenly goods, in such a way as to have for the rest only contempt and disgust; we shall have no heart but for God, we shall have but one heart with God. This is the end; but the beginning is to detach our heart from the earth—that is, to be poor in spirit.

We do not know sufficiently what a chain wealth is to souls, and how strongly it rivets them to the world. In order to account for this, we must first divest ourselves of it, and yet this is not enough; for we are quick to make a generous act: a glow of the heart suffices for this; and to how many hearts is such a glow easy enough? We must willingly, or by constraint, live in poverty. Then we begin to recognise, from having our wishes frustrated, and our attachments broken off, the passions more or less secret, which we have condemned to die. I am not speaking of avarice, or of cupidity; I am speaking of that wide and ever gaping chasm which riches offer to satisfy our desires; not only our bad desires, for whose gratification riches constitute a continual temptation, but our lawful ones,—the desires, I mean, which are natural, human, earthly. I am speaking of that sort of rampart which wealth raises up between the soul, and the mortification of the senses, of Christian austerity, and of that evangelical penance from which no child of Adam is dispensed. I am speaking of that strange exemption that wealth ensures to him who possesses it, from a great part of the evils which weigh heavily on the human race.

“They are not in the labour of men,” says the Psalmist ; “neither shall they be scourged as other men” (Ps. lxxii. 5). I am speaking of the character of solidity and enduring stability, which wealth impresses on our life here below, which, under pain of forfeiture towards God, and of our eternal destiny, should yet continue to be for us, a transitory and a pilgrim life. I am speaking once more of that independence which money favours, of that power with which it invests its possessor, of that high protection it permits us to claim, of that supremacy in which it seems to establish us, and, by consequence, of that pride which it insinuates, which it nourishes—I was going to say, which it authorises. In a word, I am speaking of that atmosphere of illusion and of lies in which it obliges men to live, whether by reason of the deceitful dreams it creates, or on account of the base, interested, and false spirit which they most commonly and almost irresistibly have who form the surroundings of the rich man.

See, then, what roots the rich have in this world, and to what a depth does each day of their life drive them into the earth ! Thus, how attached they are to this world, and what a display they make in it ! What confidence and self-possession in their gait ! How peaceable, how blooming, how pleasant is their life ! How easily do they admire themselves ! How instinctively they make themselves their own centre ! Their crowd of attendants, from which they derive so foolish a vanity, the wretched attachment they have to this vain show, their imperious need of it ; all this tends to lessen their personal work ; and yet, strange to say, it tends to exalt their personality, by presenting themselves to themselves as a sort of extension of their being, and a natural radiation of their life. I will tell you the greatest misfortune that happens to

these men. They can almost do without hope. How is the thought of Heaven to rouse, to warm, to ravish their hearts, to whom this world has given so much, and perhaps the joys of which, except their short continuance, they prefer? Do they, in truth, feel their exile? Is not death for them a departure, rather than an arrival? And, did I say, that those who are rich can do without hope? It seems that they could almost dispense with Providence as well. There are so many reasons for saying (and they say it willingly), "And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest; eat, drink, make good cheer" (St. Luke xii. 19). But if they have the happiness, or, rather the virtue, to believe, like their brethren, in this indispensable and evident Providence of the good God, yet they have less recourse to it, I mean, for fewer objects, less frequently, and less humbly. Can we conceive a condition morally more unhealthy and more dangerous for man, dependent as he is, than that in which necessarily he feels less the the immense, profound, incessant want that the creature has of God? Reflect on all these natural and almost fatal consequences of riches, and tell me if each one of them does not appear to you as a state which is opposed, and contrary to the spirit of the holy Gospel, as an obstacle to a perfect life, and as a dark shadow, if not as a wall, between the soul and God. In short, a rich man who is humble, sincerely dependent, living on the earth with a heart estranged from it—a rich man, poor in spirit, the Scripture says is a prodigy. "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money, nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life" (Eccles. xxxi. 9).

And his very life is a miracle. God can always work miracles, and thanks be given to Him for it, He does work them. What is impossible with man is possible with Him ; and how can we forget, especially here, that if the young man, whom Jesus loved and whom He called, allowed Him to go on His way, and went away himself sorrowful, it was because "he had great possessions" (St. Matt. xix. 26).

Well, these dark shadows of which we are speaking, religious poverty dissipates and scatters ; this opposition, it destroys ; this obstacle, it makes disappear, and in its place, substitutes itself, as a powerful means of arriving at the desired end. It gives a sudden liberty to the soul. Religious poverty does more than disengage it ; besides opening for it the road, and making it bright and broad before it, the soul feels itself raised up, full of life and enterprise, as if she was suddenly borne away on wings.

Saint Ambrose ventures to say that this blessed poverty is the mother and the nurse of all the virtues.* Saint Ignatius of Loyala, calls it the mother of souls.† However, if it does not give birth to them, it at least delivers them into the hands of God, Who is the source of their life, and of all life. There is so strict a relationship between poverty of spirit and humility, that the greater number of the Fathers explain by one and by the other indifferently, the first of the eight Beatitudes. Several even seem to think that humility is understood exclusively by poverty of spirit. In fact, we said, that riches always tend to exalt self-love ; poverty tends, on the contrary, to lower it : and who does not know, and who does not

* *Generatrix, nutrixque omnium virtutum.*—In Epist. I, ad Timoth. cap. 6.

† *Diligant eam ut matrem*, ap. Roderic. Tr. de Perf. Tr. iii., c. I.

feel, that between this exaltation and this interior lowering of self, lies the problem of salvation, and that the grand debate takes place between the flesh and the spirit, which occupies all our life? One of the beauties of poverty, and one of the most active principles of its influence on souls, is that it represents outwardly that most essential condition of the creature, though not alas the most easy to recognise, I mean, its indigence. Do I astonish you by saying that this is our essential condition? We have only to look on the infant when it is born; or, if this is not sufficient, we may regard man when he is dying. Is anyone more dependent, more bare, more poor? These two extremes of life mark its true character. Riches can well cover over in a measure this reality of our indigence; but it cannot do away with it; and from the cradle to the tomb, man continues a needy being, who is hungry, always hungry, hungry for a thousand things, among which there is always something which he cannot have; so that, crying out for something every instant, he sees himself obliged by his cries, to make known his misery and his wants. Poverty hinders us from forgetting these wants, which is the same thing as to say that it hinders us from forgetting ourselves. It keeps the soul in truth, and it is thus at first it contributes to make it humble. How is it we do not see at the first glance the truth of those few words our Lord addressed to His servant Angela, "Pride is not to be found but in those who possess something, or think that they possess it. Man and the angel fell, and fell by pride, for they thought they possessed. Neither angel nor man possesses anything; all belongs to God."* It is as profound as it is

* The Book of the Instructions of the blessed Angela of Foligno, Ed. Hello. ch. 55.

simple ; and what light goes forth from this truth ? Seeing by experience that we possess nothing exteriorly, seeing this grand truth habitually, at every turn, and with a clearness which each new privation, and each new suffering renders more and more evident, we comprehend more easily that we possess nothing interiorly ; and that, consequently, we are not proprietors even of ourselves, more than of other things. What an opening of the heart is there now to see God, to see the absoluteness of His Being, the eminence of His perfections, the sovereignty of His rights. What a perfection is this for acknowledgment, for gratitude, and submission to everything that may happen ! What a preparation for abnegation, what progress in dying to ourselves ! How well is a soul thus enlightened and affected, able to steer heavenwards in this world ! and what safety is there in its conduct ! It counts nothing as nothing ; it no longer leans upon nothingness ; and the less it leans upon that nothing, which is itself, the more it leans on that great All which is God ; the only Being, Who, possessing all in possessing Himself, and Himself alone, answers completely to this utter nothing which we are. No one experiences so much as such a soul, the truth of that law according to which, "God gives His grace to the humble" (1 Peter v. 5). He who has understood this poverty, who is pleased with it, who practises it, is, so to speak, only a pure capacity of receiving God, and a capacity which attracts Him ; not by itself assuredly, but by reason of the nature of God, Who is an infinite plenitude of goodness, and by reason also of the character that He has, and His habit of inclining Himself towards what is little, of consoling whoever suffers, and of filling up whatever is void.

And, at the same time, what a source of patience and of tranquility. The truly poor expect so little, if even they expect anything. All that they receive has in their eyes the appearance of a favour. They live only by alms, they know they cannot live in any other way, and they accept it. Their poverty places them in a sort of interior nudity of all rights; they not only have none, but even they renounce having any. What room is there then, in them for revolt, for indignation, or only for murmuring. One cannot do them any injury; what ground is there for it? Doubtless they suffer, and sometimes they suffer much; but they are not deceived; and if they permit themselves to utter a sigh, or a groan, they never make any complaint. Can you imagine a disposition more radically favourable to that free, active, and continual outpouring of God into the soul, which is the essence of the Christian life, and the principle of all true virtue? This humble, this peaceable soul, is necessarily mild and gentle. It is naturally sober and chaste. St. Paul said, "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14). What a cross is poverty, between the outward and sensible world and the soul? This is not enough; we must add, between the soul and its senses, and all their animal life! All is held at a distance, and placed out of reach. When exterior goods failed, what enjoyment could such a soul have in them? The forced relation that it has with these outward blessings, as with that part of its being which corresponds, and which comes in contact with them, is almost exclusively a relation of suffering. What room is there, then, for sin? There, where the rich man finds an occasion of sin, in finding therein an opportunity for enjoyment, the poor man, on the contrary, finds an

opportunity of making an expiation; and whilst the rich contract a fresh debt, the poor continue to pay off theirs. In regard to what tempts and seduces the greater part of mankind, the evangelical poor man is like the lily of the Scripture, keeping his rectitude and his purity, because surrounded with thorns (Cant. ii. 2).

But will not such a soul so little engrossed with the things of earth, so separated from things seen, so virginal in this low world—will it not advance every day in faith, and by faith, in the knowledge, the intelligence, the relish of things Divine? What interest can she ever have in not finding true what Jesus announces to her, in not finding wise, discreet, opportune, what He deigns to ask of her? The poor in spirit have nothing to object to, they are ignorant of sophisms; they have received, and, as it were, sorted out beforehand, all that will come to them from on high. The sun on appearing above the horizon, does not more easily flood with its brightness an atmosphere without clouds, than the Word of God enlightens, whether by the Church, or by the Scripture, or by Himself, such a soul which has received this grace of an entire simplicity. It enters by poverty into the order of those “little ones” to whom, as Jesus testifies, God reveals His chosen secrets, and precisely those which He hides from the eyes of the wise and of the great of this world, and of all possessors of themselves (St. Matt. xi. 25).

It is clear that this poor man lives by hope still more than by bread. He has his heart where his treasure is (St. Matt. vi. 21), and his treasure is anywhere but on earth. All the present impels him towards the future, which is to him the demonstration of the present, as the shadow is the proof of the light; and while it proves

to him, that this future is real, it makes him feel it sovereignly desirable. The life of the poor is but an emigration to our heavenly country. No one can say as he can, "that his flesh and his heart hath fainted away," so much does he desire the living God, that for Him his soul "has thirsted, oh, how many ways" (Ps. lxii. 2). In fact, all feeling of what he wants here, is changed into desire of what he is to have hereafter, into prayer to obtain it, and into hope of possessing it; so that he aspires incessantly, and, so to speak, by every pore.*

Finally, and in a particular manner, this poor man is free to love. The more riches furnish the pretext of not answering to the calls of God (St. Luke xiv. 18), the more poverty renders us apt and prompt to hear His voice, to respond to His demands, to follow all His movements, to satisfy all His desires. And, mortifying so much the old man, which is cupidity, how will it not vivify the new man, which is all charity? Besides, voluntary poverty is a preparation and a direct incitement to love; in that, detaching us from all that is not love, it is a proof, that in our eyes love is everything (according to what is written: "And I preferred her—that is, love, which is the highest wisdom—before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches as nothing in comparison with her, neither did I compare unto her any precious stone; for all gold in comparison with her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay"—Wisdom vii. 9). Love, then, on its side, finishes the work by necessarily making us poor—

* See the admirable words of St. Augustine on this subject: "*Tota vita Christiani boni desiderium est. . . Deus differendo extendit desiderium, desiderando extendit animum, extendendo facit capacem.*"—In Epist. i., Joann. Tract. iv.

poor in spirit, in heart, and in fact, by the abundance with which it fills the whole soul, and the experience that it gives that with it we can dispense with all else. St. Gregory says ingeniously, that it is the same with the man who loves much, as with him who sets his foot in a warm country—the heat of the temperature obliges him to undress. So that poverty and love, mutually helping one another at first as devoted friends, come at length to embrace one another as sister and brother, and at last, in a higher region, close to that wherein dwell the Three Who are One, they become united as bride and bridegroom, being only one, in the same spirit, to find in that union the same fecundity, and yielding by it the same fruit to our heavenly Father. The illustrious poor man of Assisium was learned in this science, and lived on this life, of which he is one of the most marvellous examples in the Holy Church. Poverty delivered him a prey to love, and love, in consuming him, was the consummation of his poverty.

But while we are endeavouring to point out what moral perfection is the fruit of poverty, how can we omit to cite the words of God Himself one day to St. Catherine of Sienna, who herself was an admirable instance of this holy virtue? “Know, daughter, that all good, all peace, and all repose, spring from poverty. Contemplate My beloved children who are poor, and admire the holy joy in which they pass their days. Never are they sorrowful, but on account of the offences which are given Me; and this sadness, instead of afflicting them, nourishes their soul. They have by poverty found the sovereign riches. They have quitted thick darkness for the perfect light. . . . Their relations with reasonable creatures are full of love, and

with them there is no respect of persons. . . . This poverty is a queen—it is a kingdom which nothing can trouble. Peace dwells in this kingdom, and justice abounds in it, because all causes of injustice are banished from it. The walls of this city are strong, because they are not constructed of earth, nor built upon the sand, so as to be thrown down by the least movement of the wind. They are founded on the firm rock which cannot be shaken, Jesus Christ, My Son. There the day is without a night, the summer without a winter, because the mother of this great queen is infinite charity.”*

It is thus that the promise of Christ is realised: “If you would be perfect, go sell your possessions, and give the price of them to the poor” (St. Matt. xix. 21). Not, you understand, and this is the remark of Origen,† that this perfection is acquired all at once, and by the single fact of this voluntary deprivation; but this deprivation disposes the soul for it, and gives her, with ample liberty to apply herself to it, and to aim at it, a sort of right to the special graces which conduct to it, so that, starting from that deprivation, if the soul is faithful to these graces, she will infallibly arrive at that degree of perfection of which she is capable, and which God has destined for her.

Further, and it is the third motive which we wish you to weigh well, this poverty establishes particular, numerous, and admirable relations between God and the soul. You could infer it from what we have just explained to you; but here inference is far surpassed, for with precise statements and invaluable details, we have the height of certitude; for it is not the Saints alone, it is God Himself

* Dialogues, ci. . . .

† In Matth. tom. xv., No. 16 et seq. Opp. tom. iii., Ed. Migne.

Who bears testimony, and we have only to quote the Scripture.

“O God,” said David to Him, full of His Spirit, “Your eyes look upon the poor man” (Ps. x. 5), his interests are confided to You, and You take his affairs in hand ; in truth, “God Himself is his refuge” (Ps. ix. 10) ; “He is his strength, his strength in tribulation, his strength to the needy in his distress, his refuge from the whirlwind, his shadow from the heat” (Isaias xxv. 4). God never takes His Eyes from him, so to speak (Ps. x. Vulgate 5) ; and He seems to regard him in preference to all others. He lays down special laws in his regard ; and He so ardently desires that they should be observed, that while He grounds them on the most touching reasons, He strengthens them with the most fearful penalties. “The poor will never fail ; they will never be wanting in the land of your habitation,” said He to His chosen people. In this there is more than a fact ; poverty is to be rather an institution, a true social institution, and by which all will profit : “Therefore I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother that liveth in the land with thyself” (Deut. xv. 11 ; Ps. xxiii. 1 ; Deut. i. 39), that land which is Mine, and which I give to thee. But this is not enough. “If thou lend to a poor man, and he give thee his garment in pledge (having, doubtless, nothing else), the garment shall not lodge with thee that night ; thou shalt restore it to him presently before the going down of the sun, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee, and that thou mayest have justice before the Lord thy God” (Deut. xxiv. 12). “If he work for thee, thou shalt pay him the price of his labour the same day, because he is poor and with it maintaineth his life, lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be reputed to

thee for a sin." Thus, does the poor man groan ; God is irritated ; does He see him oppressed, God will arise and set him in safety (Ps. xi. 6). He remembers his cries ; He hearkens to his desire. Does the poor man recollect himself to pray : even before his heart has fully formed a desire, God has understood and graciously heard it ; He spares him in His anger ; and even if he sins, He finds in the rigour of the life he endures, a reason for granting a readier and a more ample pardon (Ps. lxxi. 13). This poverty, which is so painful, that it is like a devouring fire, and is to him who passes through it as a furnace, is a place of election (Isaias xlvi. 10) ; and when the soul has passed through it, when it has been purified and refined in it, as gold, God takes that soul and glorifies it ; for the name of the poor man is before Him a name of honour (Ps. lxxi. 14). Let this poor man, who belongs to the good God, let him be humbled and be despised, let him be abandoned by the world like Lazarus, or, like Job, be cast upon a wretched dunghill, God will hold him by the hand, and, replacing his dirty rags with a purple robe, He will make him sit on a throne in the assembly of the Saints, in the midst of the princes of His people (Ps. cxii. 7, 8). It would be but little to send him an Angel as He did to Elias, to give him bread for the body ; He Himself nourishes his soul with mysterious and exquisite dainties. " The poor shall eat, and they shall be satisfied " (Ps. xxi. 27). And what will this nourishment be ? It will be a portion of the sweetness of God, of that ineffable unction which flows from His Being, and the unspeakable sweetness which he will taste in partaking of His Life (Ps. lxxvii. 11). God will inundate the poor with light, in giving them His Word ; He will abundantly satisfy them in pouring out upon them His Holy Spirit.

We saw this very clearly when the Word appeared on the earth ; one of the first functions which was prophetically assigned to Him, was to be the Judge of the poor, to render them justice, and to remove from them the hard and heavy hands that had enslaved them (Ps. lxxi. 2, 4, 12). He was not only their Judge, but their Friend and their Brother. The poor were the first who were informed of His birth, and, informed of it by Angels from Heaven, they were first called to the crib, the first evangelised, the first converted, the first honoured with the title of Apostles and of the intimate friends of the Master, and of co-operating with Him in His Ministry of salvation. So that, ever since, they have not ceased to form the aristocracy of the Church, and have continued to be the favourites of the Heart of God.*

Meditate on each of these characteristics, examine each of these prerogatives, understand and relish each of these relations, special, astonishing, and priceless as they are, which God declares to be established, regularly and irrevocably established between Himself and the poor, and say if this gain, were it the only one, is not worth all the riches of the world, and consequently a hundredfold more than all that is abandoned for it ?

Certainly, the Church is as it were a fleet sailing over the waves of time, under the conduct of Christ, Who is the Wisdom which is infallible, the Power which is invincible, and Whose Providence is full of love ! the whole fleet, including even the humblest barque, is directed, watched over, and aided by Him. I venture to say, that the poor in spirit, and especially the poor by vow, sail with the Head Himself, in the admiral's ship ;

* Everyone knows the beautiful Sermon of Bossuet on the eminent dignity of the poor in the Church.

and this is only the outward portion of these Divine relations, since the question here is especially that of assistance. Who can speak of what passes within, and what the heart that is faithful, pure, and fervent, is able to find in holy poverty and to draw from it? Here there is quite a world of higher lights, of inestimable graces, and of holy joys.

There is one reason which partly explains these relations, and establishes a new motive for loving poverty : this poverty makes the soul like God.

We may ask : is God rich or poor? According to the aspect in which we look at this question, the answer will be different. If we consider it exteriorly, from without, the apparatus, so to speak, the resources at hand—in a word, what here below we call riches, and which is one aspect for us—God has nothing at all of this sort. In Himself He is without garment, without house, without domain, and without premises. He is without treasures, without armies, without servants ; He is without nourishment, without means, without organs—in a word, without anything whatever. The flower is naked—it is its beauty ; but the flower has a root which bears it, a sap which gives it life, an atmosphere which it breathes and in which it blooms ; it has the sun which warms it, the dews of heaven which give it seasonable refreshment : all this is riches to the flower. God has not what the flower possesses. The Angels are bare. Yes, they also : the light with which they are clothed is only the splendour of their own being. If they borrow a sensible form, it is in no way for their profit, but for ours ; and their mission over, this outward form vanishes more quickly than the smoke before a stormy wind. They act upon the world of bodies ; but this is to them a service,

and by no means an addition to their being. In regard to the goods of earth, they are entirely without them; and if they had them, they would not be able to make use of them. However, the Angel has his riches as he has his needs: need of light, need of succour, need of love, need of joy. When these blessings come to him, it is not from his own fund that he draws them; he borrows them, or, rather, he receives them; and when he has received them, though in principle they remain true gifts, yet they constitute a real possession. The Angels, then, are rich. God is not as they are: He is bare of all property that belongs not to His Essence. Under this aspect, then, He is poor. He is the great example of poverty—the only one truly poor, and like everything within Him, His poverty is infinite. The creation makes no change whatever in His poverty. Without doubt it belongs to Him, and forms His domain; everything in it is His, as everything in it is from Him. But subject to His infinite power, it in no way affects His Essence; He possesses it for its sake, and not for Himself, through beneficence, and not through indigence, so that in reality He remains exclusively what He is eternally—that is to say, deprived of all exterior property, and reduced to Himself alone.

And yet who does not see that He is infinitely rich—that He alone is rich, and that His riches are truly as infinite as His poverty? Where are these divine riches? In God. And what are those riches? God Himself: He is life, knowledge, wisdom, power, beauty, glory, love, tranquillity, happiness. God is all. To possess Himself is to possess all good—to possess it in perfection, and in a manner unchangeable. He regards Himself, and all is seen; He loves Himself, and

all is full ; He rejoices in this regard and in this love, and His beatitude is at His height.

Now, do you see how the truly poor man imitates God in this? "Sell all, give all, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (St. Mark x. 21). Being poor, he then becomes rich, and rich because he is poor ; poor on earth, rich in heaven ; poor without, rich within ; poor, according to the animal man, rich, according to the spiritual man ; poor, as to this world, and in this world, rich, with regard to God, and in God—in a word, it is precisely after the manner of God, that he is at once rich and poor ; and it is thus that he is like to Him. Because he enters freely, and as far as he can, into this holy destitution in which God lives by nature, he enters at the same time into that higher opulence of God, which is the proper and essential condition of the Divinity. "Having nothing," said St. Paul, tracing the portrait of Christians, or, at least, of the Apostles, "yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi. 10). "Ah ! henceforth," exclaimed St. Francis, in putting off the last garment he had received from his father, to return it to him, "henceforth I shall say with confidence : 'Our Father, Who art in Heaven.'"^{*} Do you understand this grand doctrine, this marvellous exchange, and what a precious pearl is poverty, and that to purchase it, we do well to sell all (St. Matt. xiii. 46).

Poverty clothes the soul with a superhuman beauty ; it raises it to a dignity, to an elevation of life, which neither science, nor wisdom, nor power, nor any other purely natural virtue, would ever enable it to reach. One word expresses all ; it divinely transforms it. The poor

^{*} Vita S. Francisci Assis. ap. Boll., tom. ii. Oct. Comment. Præv. vi. 130.

man has the habits of God ; he borrows His tastes, he takes His character, he begins to lead His life ; it is more than the apprenticeship and the prelude to Heaven. The Gospel does not say, " Blessed are the poor, for they shall have the kingdom of Heaven ;" but it says, " for they have " it, and it already belongs to them, while on earth. They reduce themselves so as to have nothing but God alone, being sure that God is sufficient for them, and they declare this before all men. But if the inferior man within them protests, let him protest, with the rejoinder that he must wait until " that which is mortal is swallowed up by life " (2 Cor. v. 4). Then all will see clearly if the true riches are something external, as the world is so bent upon saying, or whether it be within, in the interior, as the Holy Gospel affirms. Until then, if it appears to the flesh that God is not sufficient, the poor man is yet very decided to depend on God alone ; and it is the truth that he will find in God, to a certainty, at the proper time, in the measure required, or rather with an abundance we can never sufficiently admire, all that is necessary for bringing to a good end his pilgrimage in this world.

You cannot be ignorant that God is pre-eminently all things ; that is to say, that all in this universe, that is true, and good, and beautiful, and mighty, under the various and innumerable forms of His creatures, not only comes from God as its principle, but also subsists in Him, as the universal model, in a manner incomparably more excellent, and, as we are wont to say, more transcendental ; so that whatever gifts God may bestow upon His various creatures, He always remains the same Himself, and He can continue to work without their intermediate agency. Now, behold the lot of the poor, and to what extent

their life is Divine. God becomes their all, as He is His own all, to Himself; they have a title or claim upon God, that He should become to them personally all that they have quitted for His sake, in the measure at least, of what they need in order to live. "You shall have no inheritance in Israel," said the Lord to the Levites; "I am your inheritance" (Ezech. xliv. 28). Oh, what a portion! and how can we help exclaiming, "My inheritance is goodly to me" (Ps. xv. 6). But none have more right than the poor to sing this Canticle. God is their whole fortune! If it is pleasing to God, Who is as wise as He is mighty, He doubtless often employs the ministry of creatures to relieve the necessities of His poor. If the "whole universe should fight with Him against the unwise" (Wisdom. v. 21), it is clear, that upon His order, all things can now be made to minister to the Saints. But even then, and to show that He does not abdicate His power, that He keeps His word, and that He performs His part, God, in giving to the work that He causes to be done, the form of a miracle, marks it frequently with His own personal seal. From Elias to Saint Antony, from Saint Antony to Saint Francis, from Saint Francis to the Curé d'Ars, the life of the poor of our good God is quite full of prodigious instances of His assistance. We may say that in that blessed climate in which poverty dwells, or rather in that climate which she creates herself by dwelling in it, miracles spring up of themselves, and their birth is spontaneous. There are miracles God works for His poor; there are also those which the poor work in the Name of God. There is no one to whom the history of the Saints is familiar, who has not been struck with this fact—that the voluntary poor often work wonderful miracles. What a worker of won-

derful miracles was St. Martin of Tours, and how poor he was, to cite only one whose moral stature surpasses all the rest ! St. Leo long ago remarked the same of St. Peter. You know the reply of the Apostle to the lame man at the gate of the Temple : “ Silver and gold I have none, but what I have I give thee. . . Arise and walk ” (Acts iii. 6). “ What is richer than this poverty,” exclaims this great Pope ; “ Peter had not the resource of gold, but God enriched him in his own person. This man whom his mother had brought forth lame, Peter cured by a single word. And this same Apostle, who, to pay the tribute, had not even one piece of money with the likeness of Cæsar on it, had the power to impress on a fellow-man the Divine likeness of Christ. . . And not only that, but the same poor Apostle, who had not a farthing to give to him who stretched out his hand for it, was able to bestow so great an abundance of grace, that as he had set the lame man on his feet, so he made straight and cured the hearts of thousands of men who listened to his word.”*

By stripping himself of all that is of the earth, it is clear that the poor masters it ; for we master what we can do without, and this is why the Saints say that the poor man is a king. “ It is to be king of this world,” said Saint Teresa, “ to despise its goods.”† Saint Bernard had

* *Quid hæc paupertate locupletius? Non habet præsidia pecuniæ, sed habet dona naturæ. Quem debilem edidit mater ex utero, sanum fecit Petrus ex verbo; et qui imaginem Cæsaris in nummo non dedit, imaginem Christi in homine reformavit. . . Et ille pauper qui non habebat quod potenti daret, tantam dedit gratiæ largitatem, ut, quemadmodum unum hominem redintegravit in pedibus, sic tot millia credentium sanaret in cordibus.*—S. Leo, *Serm. xcv. De Gradibus Ascens. ad Beatit.*

† Path of Perfection, chap. ii.

said : "The friendship of the poor makes the friends of the king ; but the love of poverty makes them kings."* They enter, according to Saint Ambrose, into participation with God in His domain of the universe.† That is to say, that this blessed poverty re-establishes, as much as may be, man, the sinner, in that sublime state of original justice, in which the whole order of the inferior nature was regularly subject to him, as to its incontestable sovereign, and to its immediate God. This explains, in part, what we have said of the facility which the saintly poor have in working miracles ; and their power, as well as their dignity, and all the rest of their privileges, come from this resemblance with God, of which their poverty is the principle.

Is this all? No ; this poverty was the portion of Jesus on the earth. I do not venture to decide that this is a more sublime motive than the preceding ; but, without doubt, it is more touching to us all. I say, to us all ; I mean all the members of Christ who are Christians, but still more touching assuredly to those consecrated souls, those chaste virgins, who, being united to Him, are more especially called His Spouses. For, who will espouse the life of Jesus, as they who have espoused His Person? Angela of Foligno said that "true friendship could not exist between a rich man and a poor man."‡ If friendship cannot exist between such, how can love and conjugal union? Is there a woman in the world who, on espousing a man, does not also espouse his

* *Amicitia pauperum constituit amicos regis ; amor paupertatis reges facit.*—*Epist. ciii.*

† *Cui portio Deus est, totius naturæ possessor est effectus, videlicet totius quidam cum Domino dominus.*—*In Psalm cxviii.*

‡ *Her Life, chap. xii.*

condition? If there is a married woman who lives in abundance when her husband is in indigence, is she a faithful wife? If she has not utterly failed in fidelity, she has already betrayed her love, and what an inclination is that, to be a traitress to fidelity! Well! you know, but we must repeat it, the portion of Jesus upon earth, the portion He willed, chose, preferred, kept, and defended always and against all, was that of poverty.

I said that it was His portion which He kept and carefully preserved; for if the exterior creation suffers violence and groans, in that it serves so often sin and sinners, this supposes that its inclination, and its want, and its joy would have been to serve the just one by excellence—its chief, its true proprietor, its creator, its God, Jesus. It went to Him of itself, bringing to Him all that it had of life, of beauty, of utility, and of delight; it made a present of them to Him, too honoured and too happy to be entirely tributary to Him, and to deliver itself to Him for His use. It inclined to Him as the rivers follow the bed which bears them to the ocean. This sweet mystery is hidden under this saying of St. Paul: "Who having joy set before Him," and His Humanity excepted, it was a joy offered Him by all, and from all sides. Jesus stopped this burst of joy by refusing this offer, and He refused this offer because He had resolved to reject the joy, to take and endure the Cross instead (Heb. xii. 2). Doubtless poverty was not the whole of this Cross that Jesus embraced; it was, however, one of its principal branches, even if it did not form its trunk.

Besides, when we think of it, what were better suited to one another than Jesus and poverty?*

* Cfr. S. Thom. 3 pars Summæ: Quæst. xl., art. 2 et 3.

imagine the Messiah as the Jews dreamed Him to be, surpassing Solomon in riches, and surrounded with a pomp eclipsing that of the Assyrian kings? Would we see Jesus, having for His principal abode a glorious and fortified capital, dwelling in a palace, in which the treasures of the earth should be accumulated? His Person, guarded by soldiers, and served by officers of every grade, having here His throne, there His record office, further on, His banqueting hall, then His festive chamber—in a word, all that equipage, so much to be envied, so dazzling, but wretched, because common, and which generally attends the indigent majesty of sovereigns here below? There is no occasion to ask if this would be becoming to the Universal Penitent, to the Victim Who bore our sins, and came to pay our debt into the Hands of God's Justice. To regard in Jesus only the Teacher of the human race, the Pastor of souls, and their Initiator in the ways of God, was it fitting that He should commence, by awarding to Himself all this lower world of human riches, the parent sources of all sensible joys; and which, from the fruit of the forbidden tree to the unbridled luxury of the Roman Emperors, had been the great instrument of iniquity, the cause of so much blindness of heart, the stimulant of the most detestable passions, the veil thrown over our last end, the obstacle laid in the way which conducts to it, the rivals of God in souls, and the principal armour of Satan to withdraw them from Him, and to cause their ruin? O God! who does not see that such a Christ could not be received, and instead of manifesting the Divinity and of aiding His work, this display would have hidden the one and have compromised the other? What sign, in truth, would it have been of a God, to have appeared either so needy or

so greedy of that which is the lowest and vilest of fallen man's possessions, of that which he seeks for with so much the more passion, as he is less enlightened and less wise; of that which, though of some service to the few, is for the greater number only the occasion, if not the cause, of moral and physical corruption? Then these riches would have created resources, and consequently would have established a true human power. Now, to do some little thing by means of a great help, is there any astonishment at this, where we can see a power which surpasses all we are able to exert? But with nothing to do something, to do much, to change the face of the world, to found the Church, to constitute and arrange this new creation, which surpasses the old in beauty, and which, after having filled up the ages which it embellishes, enters on the same footing into the order of divine and unchangeable realities—is this the work of a man or of a God? Humanity entire has replied. Tertullian, then, was right in saying: “If I have before me a Christ without glory, without any sign of nobility, without exterior honour—a Christ bare, poor, without resources, there is my Christ: the true, the only Christ, the One Whom the prophets have announced, and Whom the Scriptures point out.*

However, you understand, the supreme suitableness of this state does not render it less hard, less painful for the Holy Humanity; and it is precisely because it was hard, painful, and abject, that it suited Him so well and that He had chosen it. Jesus Christ was then poor; but as it was also fitting, His poverty attained such proportions

* Si inglorius, si ignobilis, si inhonorabilis, meus erit Christus: talis enim habitu et adpectu annuntiabatur.—Advers. Marcion., lib. iii, cap. 17.

as are far beyond the reach of any other.* He was born poor, of poor parents, in a poor stable, having only a crib for His cradle, and poor rags for swaddling clothes. He was poor in Egypt, and continues poor at Nazareth. He was poor in His hidden life, and poor also in His public life. He was surrounded by the poor, and He chose His disciples among the poor. He from Whom kings receive their purple, had but a poor woollen garment Himself. He Who feeds the angels and the birds, suffered from hunger. He Who created the sun, endured the piercing cold; He Who had but to open His Hand to enrich "every living creature," had not the small coin wanted to pay the tribute; He for Whom the Seraphim are the living footstool, had not "where to lay His Head" (St. Luke ix. 58)—in a word, He had absolutely nothing; neither His own people who revolted from Him, nor the chief elect one of His Church who denied Him, nor His Apostles who forsook Him, nor His honour, that a public condemnation took from Him, nor His power, which He allowed manifestly to give way under the banded efforts of hell, nor His strength, which He delivered as a prey to agony and to death, nor His beauty, nor even His human Form, which disappeared under His bleeding Wounds and the ravage of His mangled Flesh, nor His Blood which He poured forth to the last drop, nor His Life which He gave to whomsoever would take it, nor His Mother, of whom He deprived Himself for the sake of St. John, nor even His Heavenly Father, always present in Him, no doubt, always and

* The Blessed Angela of Foligno is one of the Saints who have more profoundly fathomed this mystery of the poverty of Jesus, and have spoken of it in a way the most exact and the most striking.—See chap. 59, edit. Hello.

indissolubly One with Him, but of Whose sensible Presence He deprived Himself as much as He could, whence it came, that He uttered that cry : " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " (St. Matt. xxvii. 47).

Is this enough ? Did He leave poverty when on the Cross ? Did He leave, at least at the sepulchre, this beloved companion of His whole life ? Ah ! justice at length shines forth, and this intimate splendour of Jesus, which had remained for thirty-three years enveloped and captive, commences to make itself known. Jesus stands erect, all full of life, for ever victorious over death—radiant, dazzling, Divine. It is a miracle that He does not immediately re-ascend to the right hand of His Father, the only place which at present befits Him. He is constrained at length to leave as to His own Person, His first state of poverty, and to share the opulence of His Father as He shares His glory. And yet, by a secret which His Love demands of His Wisdom, and of which He obtains of His Almighty Power the stupendous execution, He finds means of accommodating in Himself those two conditions apparently contradictory, of being Divinely rich in the height of Heaven, and of still continuing, even to the last day, in His Divine Humanity, poor on earth : Jesus continues poor in the Eucharist, in which His natural Body is present ; He continues poor in the Church, which is His Mystical Body.

Certainly, you can clearly see that He is poor in the Eucharist. Regard Him in His Tabernacle—that Jesus Who is the light and glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem. What surroundings ! What an abode ! What a state ! What abasements ! What abandonment ! Alas ! we must add, to what treatment is He subjected ! It is

not injury only that He suffers ; it is profanation ; it is every kind of innumerable abominations to which in the Holy Eucharist He is every day exposed, and which almost every day He endures ! It is an abyss of charity ; yes, the Angels lose themselves in it—but is it not also an abyss of poverty, and which abyss of the two seems to you the more profound ?

We cannot say, either, if Jesus is more or less poor in His Eucharistic state than in His mystical Body the Church. For as He is a Priest in His priests, a Martyr in His martyrs, and a Virgin in His virgins, He is poor in all His poor ; and the poor are and will always be very numerous in the Church—much more so than among the Jews, for they are an institution in it ; and such a one, I mean to say, so well founded and so essential, that no power will destroy it and no age will witness its disappearance. Poverty, among us, becomes part of the inheritance we have received ; it is a regular vehicle of that grace which gives us life ; it forms one of the indispensable characteristics of the resemblance of the Church to Christ, and one of the marks of that sanctity which flows from that resemblance, that it may shine forth before the world and condemn it if it does not serve at first to convince and to convert it. Now, Jesus, Who is in His Body the Church, and in every part of it, is most particularly in the poor, who are its principal members ; and, as in the days of His mortal life, He is poor in it in every way : poor in spirit ; poor in fact ; poor as to worldly goods, credit, and power ; poor as to outward joy ; poor as to esteem and approbation ; poor in human success ; alas ! and especially poor in the love which is shown Him ; for, in exchange for that which He gives, and for the services He renders, and the

Divine graces He dispenses, and for the sacrifice of self which He makes at every instant, without complaining and without calculating, you can testify that for the most part, when He does not receive outrage and hatred, He receives only ingratitude, indifference, and forgetfulness.

“We will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments,” says the Bride, in the *Canticle of Canticles*. This is to be understood in a particular manner of the Holy Poverty of Jesus. You will not meditate on it, you will not measure its extent, without feeling yourself irresistibly attracted to follow always and fervently the vow of poverty that you have had the grace to make : you will wish to animate your whole life and your works by the spirit that this vow supposes, signifies, and contains ; you will be happy to deliver yourselves up incessantly and unreservedly to the Divine movement of the virtue to which the vow obliges you. You will not only aim at despoiling yourselves of those perishable goods that your Divine Spouse esteemed as nothing, and which He never wished for Himself ; but, with humility, and reverence, and piety, you will penetrate the mystery of His interior poverty, in order to participate in it, as is the duty of a true Bride. Thus, as I impressed upon you, when I was explaining the higher degrees of perfection to which this virtue of poverty rises, and raises us, you will detach yourselves, were it only by desire, and by the will, from all that is not purely God. All that is less than Himself, you will no longer call either profit or riches, but loss, as St. Paul calls it (*Philipp. iii. 7*), in so far at least as it might be an obstacle to your consummate union with God. Yes, even in this order of possessions (which are elevated, spiritual, and interior), you will often prefer to

have less than more, for fear that, getting too much attached to this more which would be given you, you would deserve to have it taken from you. Ah ! you will wish to be very rich in God. Here, ambition, the ardent desire, the passionate seeking, is much more than permitted : it is counselled ; or, rather, ordered (Ps. civ. 4). Tell me the limit God has placed to the love we should have for Him, and I will tell you where the desire of possessing Him should stop. Here, excess, for us, is not even the measure. Believe, that if, by impossibility the most holy Soul of Christ had not been created from the first in that state of hypostatic union which gave it instant and entire possession of the Divinity, and that in some other way it had seen the possibility of acquiring this union, that some would have desired nothing so much, it would have sought for it with a measureless zeal, and would have purchased it at any price. It would then be to misapprehend what is poverty of spirit and humility, which are in this matter but one and the same thing ; to demand of it, that it would inspire those desires of God, which are less fervent and less magnanimous. What is said of this by certain spiritual authors, particularly by St. John of the Cross, is meant of the gifts of God, but not of God Himself, Who is always superior to His gifts, and Who alone is our last end. And again, as to His gifts, as there are many of them which cannot be separated from the possession of God, as grace in this world and the light of glory in the other ; and therefore, as we should be committing an actual sin not to desire them at all, so we should be very imperfect if we had for them only a feeble desire. Besides this, I say, and extending this doctrine to the gifts of God, of whatever kind they may be, the poor who know it is true, that they can

never merit them, ask, however, for them often and with ardour—not for the consolation they hope to feel in them, but especially on account of the help they find in them, to raise them higher in the knowledge and love of Him Who is their Author, and Whom we can never know or love too much, or even enough.*

We will only say one word more, and mention but one additional motive. This religious poverty, which renders you so beneficent to your supernatural family, which liberates you, which delivers and spiritualises you, which establishes between you and God such touching relations and makes you true resemblances of the Divinity,—this poverty, which puts you in the practical communication with the life of Jesus, and thus marks the strength, the depth, the generosity of your love for Him, associates you also with His work and gives you the strength of powerfully co-operating with it; the work of reparation and of redemption, the work of illumination and sanctification, the work of reconciliation and of universal peace, in truth and in love: it is the work of Christ, but also that of His poor; it is the work and natural and unfailing effect here below of their common poverty.

You who have left all, renouncing by vow ever to possess anything on earth, you make amends, as far as lies in you, for this world of iniquity, of which earthly riches are and will be, even to the end, the hateful and unwearying cause. Ah! how this conviction (for it is such), how this view (for it is your own) should render light the burden of your privations, and of all the suffer-

* We may see how the Holy Church, our mistress in prayer, makes us ask these gifts of God, in the prayers of the Missal and of the Breviary, which, being her official prayer, are the rule of our conduct and of our sentiments.

ings they occasion ! I am poor and I suffer ! Yes, but thus "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ" (Coloss. i. 24). I continue His blessed passion, I localise it, I appropriate it to myself, I extend it, and I apply it to others ; and from my life thus voluntarily stripped of everything, as from one of those Catholic altars whereon Jesus is continually immolated, my sacrifice ascends to God, to render to Him a little of that glory which is incessantly ravished from Him, by the idolatry of gold and of self-indulgence.

And at the same time that they do this, the Religious poor enlighten and sanctify mankind. They maintain the Gospel, in professing so openly whatever in it is more difficult, more arduous, and more perfect. They prove the reality of grace, which alone gives a superhuman help to do superhuman works, and especially of living with perseverance in a state in which nature is continually sacrificed. They honour the virtue of prayer and the sacraments, which are manifestly and exclusively the heavenly provision for their journey, and the sole supporters of their strength. They preach ; even in concealing themselves, even in keeping silence, they announce the good tidings of Jesus Christ. They say, and by the sole fact of the singular state in which they persevere, that true happiness is not where the world dreams it is, where the world obstinately keeps seeking it, and where the world will never find it. The poor say that we may live in joy without any attachment to the things of earth, and even that the less we are attached to them, the greater will be our joy. They are the guarantees of the Divine promises, the eloquent commentators of the Cross, the prophets of Heaven, and the anticipated witnesses of the delights that are there experienced. They carry souls on

high, they teach almsgiving to the rich, and patience to that crowd of humanity which submits to poverty only by compulsion. They oblige the one to reflect, and invite the rest to hope; they cause the former to remember hell, and the latter to wait for Heaven.

And it is thus that Religious, who are bound by the vow of poverty, labour for that great reconciliation which the hateful separations caused by sin have rendered necessary. Jesus came to bring among us the precept, the grace, and the secret of that peace of all with all, which Satan detests and obstructs; because, since he is the "hater," all that is called love, and gives love, and binds in love, opposes his passion of hatred, crosses his design, weakens his power, and wounds himself, not in his heart, for he has none, but in the place where his heart was—that is, in the essence of his being. The poor of Jesus Christ have not ceased a single day to labour for this universal pacification. First, how many times have they saved the Church, the treasure and source of all peace! In a dream still celebrated, the great Pope Innocent the Third saw the walls of the Church of the Lateran, the mother and mistress, you know, of all the other Churches of the world; he saw its walls shaken; it seemed that the temple was about to fall. But one man alone, of poor appearance, held up the edifice. This man, Innocent soon saw, in reality, it was a poor man, and the father of a countless family of other poor men, Francis of Assissi, whose rule the Pope at first, with some hesitation, completely approved.* St. Augustine thinks, that in the latter day, Saints will arise in the Church, who will surpass in heroism, all those she had seen honoured and invoked

* Vita S. Francisci ap. Bolland.—Loco jam cit. § xi.

in the course of preceding ages.* They will be her glory and her strength, in these days of frightful trial. But precisely because the trial will be dreadful, and that evil, in the person of anti-Christ, will have exteriorly vanquished the just, and mastered all, we may be assured that those giants of virtue will be, beyond comparison, poor.

If the world wished it, these poor of Christ, who save the Church, would bring peace to the world. There is but one evil, the root of all evils, St. Paul says; this is cupidity (1 Tim. vi. 10). There is but one good, from which all good flows, which is charity. Suppose that if the spirit of the poor of Jesus was diffused and lived in the hearts of all mankind, war would cease immediately, social war especially.† Their arms would only serve men to help and embrace one another; the different classes of mankind remaining distinct, because such is the order of God, would be nevertheless united, as God wishes also and commands; they would oblige one another by mutual services, and would preserve friendly relations. Because only the kingdom of God and His justice would be sought, all the rest would come in addition (St. Matt. vi. 33). True fraternity would be established by love, and the earth, notwithstanding its hard labours, and its inevitable tears, would become the vestibule of Heaven. It is to this happy state that the oracle of the Master referred, when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (St. Matt. vi. 1).

* De Civit. Dei., lib. xx., cap. 8.

† Is it impossible here not to call to mind the words of St. James: "From whence are wars and contentions among you? are they not from your concupiscences?"—St. James iv. 1. All that St. James says in this Epistle to the rich, which is severe and terrible, proves what we are saying in favour of poverty.

ON CHASTITY.

THERE is no one who does not see the importance in a moral point of view, of questions which regard the body. The moral life is entirely in the soul : the soul alone understands the law ; the soul alone has in itself, with the possibility of violating it, the power of obeying it, and of preserving, or of compelling the obedience of every faculty, which is naturally under her dependence. She is the seat of the virtues, and for the same reason of the vices also, being at once the centre of all those passions, which, as they are well or ill regulated, produce these vices or these virtues. But what is the moral law, but the true order of relations ; and what is the morality of a being, if not its voluntary and constant adjustment to this sacred order ? Now, if there is for the human soul, a relation which is necessary, incessant, near, and delicate, surely it is the relation which it has with that body of which it is the substantial form, the support, the life, the unity ; that body without which it does not exist even for an instant on the earth, and from which death itself separates it only for a time, and through a violence, of which sin is the only cause. So many relations which the soul endures, or voluntarily forms with the exterior world, resolve themselves into this first and principal

relation which binds it to its own body ; more especially as in most cases it is for the service and the profit of this body, that it seeks for such or such an object, obtains it, and makes use of it. It is to enjoy what we wish to have, especially to enjoy it feelingly : enjoyment is more than the brother of luxury, it is its father and purveyor.

Besides, who does not know, who does not feel, to what a degree, man, in forsaking God, has lost his equilibrium, and thus the soul is naturally inclined to the body, not to say, absorbed in it? Who does not see the enormous place, that in each of us, but especially in the great crowd of human beings, the animal life usurps and occupies? It would already be much, that this life should have so many and such enslaving wants ; but we must join to this, the audacity, the impetuosity, the excess, and, alas ! the success of the most irregular passions. The Scripture says, what is fearful, because it is true ; that by means of sin, on account of sin, man has become flesh, and that "all flesh had corrupted its way" (Gen. vi. 3, 12).

It is not possible that to so many and such grave questions, Christianity should not give a precise and peremptory solution. On this point, as on all others, it has said all that is to be said ; at least, all that concerns us to know in this world, until there is revealed to us in heaven, all that we need to know in order to be completely satisfied. Christianity, then, teaches the doctrine concerning the body ; it states the moral law which governs it, it relates its history, it explains its state, it reveals its final destiny. And all this it teaches as it teaches other truths, as a master, without hesitation, and without permitting the least hesitation ; after having proved its competence, and shown its authority, it states

its doctrine. Then, because, being light to discover, and, at the same time, grace and strength to act, it first raises the body from that fall, of which it is only the victim, because it was first of all the accomplice; then cures it by degrees, of that weakness which its first resurrection left in it, and thus fits it successively to all the conditions claimed by its destiny. Besides, the model which Christianity proposes to man in this matter, as also the remedy it points out to him and gives him, is the Flesh itself of Christ. Flesh, which is at first infirm and afflicted, on account of the iniquity of which it bears innocently and holily the burden, in order to pay the debt; then freed, glorious, and blessed, after this debt is rendered, and the love of the Father for His Son Incarnate can follow freely and wholly its course.*

A word of expression and profound meaning sums up the moral law which is prescribed to the soul in its relations to the body—it is the word chastity; it expresses at once a duty and a virtue.

In the classical system, chastity is connected with that great cardinal virtue which we call temperance; it constitutes, as it were, a distinct domain of that vast region of which temperance is the mistress. In itself it is a royal habit which enables the soul to hold under its sceptre and in complete submission the acts of the body, whatever they may be, even to its movements. It is, as it were, a powerful ally lending its strength to our reason, in order that among so many subjects which this reason

* Saint Ignatius of Antioch speaks of chastity as of a special honour which we render to the Flesh of Christ. *Si quis potest, in castitate ad honorem carnis Christi cum humilitate maneat.*—*Epist. ad Polycarp.*

finds in each of us, and especially among our organs, so easily disturbed, so undisciplined, and always so ready to rebel, there might not be a single one which does not attend to its orders, or, at least, does not side with it when it is apprised of them. And when, from being moral and natural (which it is in acting thus), this virtue becomes Christian and supernatural, not only its strength grows immensely greater, but it is not then reason alone that it serves, but faith also—the true and divinely consecrated Queen by whom reason itself is supernaturally exalted. So that, inspired by this faith, and espousing its cause, chastity encircles all this inferior world of our body with more numerous, with firmer, with closer bonds—bonds of light and of love, which impel it to reservations and to works, which are not only more wise, but holy. You see then : chastity puts order, and a divine order, into all the organic economy of man ; in so far, at least, as this economy is subject to our freedom, and falls under the moral law. It becomes thus, as it were, the Hand of God Himself applied to the body of man, and governing it wholly, and always without contestation and dispute.

Chastity is a virtue which is austere, strong, manly, jealous, delicate, difficult, and altogether full of delight.

It is austere, because, to maintain peace and harmony in this body in which sin has caused such divisions and disturbance, we must positively subdue it ; and we cannot subdue it without treating it harshly, we must add, without treating it ill. Chastity, and chastisement, even in French, although less clearly marked than in the Latin (which is the language to which these terms belong), are two kindred words, derived from the same root, and expressing an analogous idea, though the second refers

rather to the means employed, and the first to the effect obtained. It is also a strong virtue ; it needs must be so, to be austere, and to acquit itself of its hard office. It must be strong, further, to be able to resist the seductions by which it is surrounded ; for it has this property in particular, that it is seldom attacked but on the side of flattery, and that the most formidable weapon of which its enemy usually makes use against it, is tenderness and caresses, and hence it is a manly virtue. That which is so often recommended in the Scripture, to be a man, and to act manfully (Josh. i. 18—Psalm xxx. 25), is here of direct application. Therefore, we are accustomed to call effeminate those who habitually want the courage to be chaste. It is also a jealous virtue—jealous for the sake of God Whose interests it defends, Whose work it does, Whose empire it maintains. Its eye is like a flame, its hand as a flaming torch ; it is like to that cherub which guarded the entrance of the earthly paradise. And at the same time, its delicacy is inconceivable. All armed as we see it to be, and always ready to go to war, it resembles the dove which takes to flight when it hears a solitary footstep ; we might call it a flower that a slight breath of air sets in motion, and whose head bends before a sparkling ray of sunshine, and which dies under the embrace of the slightest frost. It is timid, it easily blushes ; it loves the shade, and keeps itself retired ; its life is discretion, precaution, and government. Under this relation there are none of the virtues with which it delights to associate, more than humility, mortification, and prudence. But this proves what we have already said of it, that it is a very difficult virtue to acquire. For first, it is a complex virtue, which supposes many others, and it cannot dispense with their concurrence,

nor live out of their company.* Further, it obliges one to constant efforts. It is not a virtue to stand still or to fall asleep. St. John Climachus calls it "a sublime negation of Nature, or, rather, a victory gained over it, and a noble challenge given by a mortal body to those Heavenly Spirits who can never die;"† all which does not indicate anything easy. Yet, notwithstanding this labour, to which it is easily understood that sufferings are often united, it is a virtue, the practice of which is full of delight. Precisely because it makes us reject and disdain earthly pleasures, it makes us merit those of Heaven, and prepares the soul to feel them. In the book of the Canticle of Canticles, the Bride comes up from the desert. She quits the earth and its pleasures; she leans on her Beloved, Who has become to her all things: she is then chaste, entirely chaste. Now, what says the Holy Spirit, and in what state does He see her? "She is flowing with delights," and her soul, all melted, flows forth in a stream of joy (Cant. viii. 5).

In a measure which each person knows, chastity is a precept. If the body becomes the master in us, were it but for a moment, it is a disorder, and the overthrow of the moral being. Heaven does not receive beings without crowns; the human soul must preserve its empire or perish. Nothing defiled shall enter the kingdom of Heaven; neither flesh nor blood can have access there (1 Cor. xv. 50); and those whom their passions deliver to flesh and blood are left without, and precipitated into hell. "Without are dogs and the unchaste," says Jesus Christ, in the great act of His last judgment (Apoc. xxii. 15).

* Quisquis coram Deo castitatem sese servaturum professus est, omni debet præcingi virtute Dei sanctâ.—S. Clemens P. Epist. i., ad Virg. cap. 3.

† Grad xv.

Whatever, then, may be the state in which our vocation places us, we ought to preserve scrupulously the chastity which corresponds with it.

But the Gospel reveals and preaches a chastity much more excellent ; and as Jesus there counsels us to renounce for Him the good things which we call riches, He there equally counsels us to reject for His love the use also of those sensual pleasures which it is sufficient in states less holy to use with sobriety. I have no occasion to prove to you the expediency of such a counsel in regard to the purity, the dignity, the liberty, and the peace of souls. All this is seen at once, and in a clear light. Now perfect chastity consists in the observance of this counsel ; and when we have always observed it, it constitutes that holy virginity which is like the precious pearl of the New Covenant, and forms in it the first bond of our humanity with God ; for it is to holy virginity, after love, that we owe Jesus Christ. Who does not understand thenceforth that all the disciples of our Divine Master praise it, exalt it, cherish it ; and that through the course of centuries many among them devote themselves to it in life and death ? Yes, in death ; for like the faith of which it is only an exquisite fruit, virginity has its martyrs, and counts them by thousands.

But whoever has understood what the treasure is which is hidden in this virtue, finds the need of placing it under strict guard, and what better or stricter guard can there be than a vow ? If a vow is admissible which separates us from exterior goods, how much more appropriate must it be in order to defend us from the solicitations and the weaknesses of the flesh ? We wish to have here a wall, and a wall that cannot be broken down ; this is the

reason why its foundation is laid irrespective of time ; we place on our sacrifice, as it were, an inviolable seal ; we give ourselves for ever to Him Who is for evermore ; for, whilst we give up our property by making ourselves poor by vow, by the vow of chastity we begin to give up our very selves. The offering is then better, more worthy of God, and eternally more profitable to the soul. All Religious make this vow, and they are only Religious on condition of making it ; it is their safety and their honour. And, besides, though they only promise by this vow to renounce for ever those kinds of sensible joys which are the special matter of the virtue of chastity (which is to immolate to God their body), yet actually they also, and before all, embrace that higher chastity of the soul, without which the other would be of small service, even though it implied a real virginity. In fact, said St. Thomas, "When the soul is united spiritually to certain things (for example, by the imagination, the memory, the thought, the affection, the desire), the soul may have in them a kind of delectation. The soul doubtless moderates this delectation if it is chaste ; but if, not being thus moderate, the delectation passes its bounds, this immoderate delectation constitutes what the Scripture calls an interior fornication, and, in consequence, a grave impurity. If, then, continues the holy Doctor, the soul legitimately delights in the spiritual union with God, and abstains from seeking pleasure in uniting itself with creatures, contrary to the divine will, this soul is spiritually chaste, and is ranked in the company of those virgins of whom St. Paul wrote, "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Cor. ii. 2).

* In quâdam spirituali conjunctione mentis ad res aliquas con-

In short, and considered in a practical point of view, chastity, properly so called, is only the religious respect the soul has for the body, for the love of that God which she has espoused in Jesus Christ; and therein is the matter of the vow of chastity, whilst the virtue of chastity, obliging it to keep with exactitude all that is comprised in the vow, disposes the soul to purity itself more and more, by detachment from all irregular delectation, as far as possible, in any creature, and especially in oneself, which is the same as saying that the vow extends to the whole of our humanity, that vigilance and that reserve in which it keeps the soul in regard to the body.

After what we have said in the first part of this book, on the Holy Fear of God, of which one of the principal effects, according to the Scripture, is “to pierce the flesh (Ps. cxviii. 120) of man,” and to restrain its impetuosity; after our instructions on the virtues of humility and mortification, and after giving directions how you may arm yourselves against temptations, among which those against chastity occupy a considerable place, there is no need, it seems to us, to speak at any length of the particular duties which refer to chastity. There is hardly any virtue on which the conscience of a Christian, especially of a Religious, is more habitually, or may be more easily enlightened. Instinct, even in this matter, is a sufficient light; as to the need, you have (and this need

sistit quædam delectatio, circa quam est quædam spiritualis castitas metaphoricè dicta, vel etiam spiritualis fornicatio, similiter metaphoricè dicta. Si enim mens hominis delectetur in spirituali conjunctione ad id cui debet conjungi, scilicet ad Deum; et abstinet se ne delectabiliter aliis conjungatur contra debitum divini ordinis, dicetur castitas spiritualis, secundum illud (2 ad Corinth. ii.) : “Despondi enim vos uni viro virginem castam exhibere Christo.”—Summ. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. cli., art. 1, 10.

is more rare, and less great than we think) to complete your knowledge on this point ; there are many spiritual books, which go into full details. I venture to add that in Christian morality, and in the science of perfection, there is no subject on which the Divine love instructs souls more naturally, more efficaciously, and, which is of more consequence than all the rest, more chastely. It does better than teach ; it makes us feel what it teaches, relish what it makes us feel, and practise constantly and heartily what it makes us relish.

Referring you, then, to this master, without slighting or excluding any others, we think it more to our purpose first to contemplate, in the full light of faith, this body, or rather all this being which is yourselves, which the holy profession of religion obliges you to preserve inviolably chaste. We will consider its Christian character, that is to say, its astonishing dignity, its marvellous endowments, its heavenly commission, its most holy characteristics, evidently so many claims which entitle it to more than reverence ; after which, elevating our regards, we will seek to discover something of the infinite perfections, pre-eminently attractive and really triumphant, of that sublime Spouse for the love of Whom you have vowed to remain always chaste, and to Whom the vow of chastity consecrates you and binds you. We are much mistaken if you will not follow us in this two-fold study, with hearts kindled with the passion of becoming virgins for ever, and of making your virginity more perfect and more beauteous day by day.

I.

The first thing which strikes us when we seek in man the foundations of that religious respect which he owes

to himself, and which is, as it were, the essence of chastity, whether of the body or of the soul, is, that man is wholly the property of God. Reason sees this and affirms it; but what splendour does faith give to this perception, what force to this affirmation! The right we have to what we possess here upon earth, is only in appearance. In the humble measure in which we exercise it, this right of possession is, doubtless, very real. God Himself has established it, and He intends that we should respect it: public order, and the very existence of society, are at stake. This right then, holds good for this world, and establishes conclusions and facts, which are entirely legitimate. But who does not see, that, limited on all sides, our manner of possessing what we have, is frail in many points. God alone is the true proprietor; He possesses because He creates; and because He alone can say, "My work;" He alone can say, "My property." Man belongs to God, because he is God's creature. There is an absolute ownership on His part, whence arises an absolute dependence on ours.*

God possesses us essentially, that is, by the mere fact of His own nature, and by that of ours. He possesses us totally, not only, so to speak, by means of what is outward and visible, or only in part, or for a time, or to a certain point: not only it is all His Being which possesses us, but His domain reaches to our origin, takes its roots, embraces all the extent, real and possible of our being, of our life, of our powers, and of our acts. It is

* Is there any need of observing that what we here say of the right which God has over all things, does not at all weaken what we have said in the preceding treatise touching His poverty? It is clear, that all absolute as it is, this right does not profit Him on any title, and does not correspond to any want which is in Him: hence it would not constitute for Him what we usually call riches.

founded on every title, it is exercised always, at every instant, under every form, across all, in spite of all ; in a manner, in fine, so sovereign, that as God of His own will was able to draw us out of nothing, or not to do so, He could plunge us into nothingness again, if such were His good pleasure. And, you understand it clearly, this domain of God is active : the right of God over us is active ; the right of God over us is never in the state of a power which is inert, or of a principle without application ; to have possession of us, is for Him, to lay hold of us ; and to lay hold of us, is to grasp us. God grasps us actually, He grasps us continually.

Even when, by the right of a benevolent and usual custom, a deposit profits him in whose hands it is placed, it in no wise deprives him of anything, who has made the deposit. He always remains the only proprietor, which the person to whom it has been confided, never becomes ; the deposit remains a deposit, and an account will have to be given of it. Such is, in regard of God, man endowed with liberty, and morally master of himself. Neither does sin, which is an abuse of liberty, withdraw man from God. The sinner is no less the possession of God, than the just, though quite after a different manner ; and, in certain respects, we may say that the sinner is even more so, since of this most gentle Hand which held him, and holds him still, the unhappy sinner has found the secret of making for himself a dreadful chain (Heb. x. 31). This is not all. In its principle, or, at least, from its first appearance in this world, sin has become for God the occasion of doing what we should have thought impossible. It seemed impossible that what is nothing could ever add to God's essential right over all His creatures. The mystery of the re-

demption of the world by Christ, doubles, however, the right of this original proprietorship, since what God possessed already, He has redeemed, and paid for, and recovered.

Who, then, will measure the depth, the sublimity, the immensity, the inviolability of this double right that God has of us, and of this double way, by which, in consequence, we belong to Him, and which makes us doubly His? "You are not your own," says St. Paul to Christians (1 Cor. vi. 19). See what is the extent of these words.

Now, endeavour to contemplate man under this aspect—I mean, consider yourselves and others, for the question is now of a common fact: separating everything else, regard man as the property of God, as that over which God has a right, as what belongs to Him, and say, if this does not immediately confer on him, in your eyes, a character of elevation, of importance, of moral beauty, almost of majesty, which inclines, or rather compels, the soul to respect, to consideration, to caution—in a word, to all those sentiments and to all those acts which are closely connected with chastity, and are its expression, and, at the same time, its exercise.

Who will despise, but especially who will claim, who will pretend to appropriate to himself this being whom God possesses as His own? Who will make use of it without discretion, without caution, without rule, with passion, with caprice, with selfishness? Who will abuse it, especially for an evil purpose? It is certain that every fault against chastity implies, at least in a measure, the actual forgetfulness of our Divine belonging. We should conclude from this, that one of the best guarantees of this virtue is this thought thoroughly meditated

on, and this view habitually held. Saint Paul judged thus of it, since having said : "You are no longer your own, for you are bought with a great price," he draws from it this grave conclusion : "Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 20).

But man is not only Divinely possessed—he is Divinely loved. It is for him like a second investiture, an addition of dignity, and consequently, a new title to be sincerely revered and chastely treated. No one is ignorant of the amount which affection adds to the value of a gift. A nothing which is loved becomes a considerable object : looking at it in itself, perhaps, we should take it without scruple ; but if we know that anyone is strongly attached to that object, the thought of depriving him of it fills us with horror. In that touching and striking narrative which Nathan made use of, to confound and to convert David, he speaks of what was of great value to the poor man whom he introduced into his story ; it was that little and only ewe lamb, in which consisted all his fortune. Certainly, in itself, it was a small affair ; but this poor man had bought and nourished this little lamb ; he had seen it grow up in the midst of his own children ; it ate of his bread, and drank out of the vessel which he used himself : at night it slept in his bosom—in a word, "it was," said the Prophet, "to him as his own daughter" (2 Kings xii).

But may we not ask, is not this our own history, and, in regard to the Divine Providence, is not each of us this little ewe lamb ? But what a shelter—we ought to say, what a sanctuary—for this innocent creature, was this tenderness so legitimate, so intense, and so manifest ? And what a wall of defence would it not seem to raise between it and the rapacity of that merciless

stranger, who revolved in his mind the sad project of carrying it off by violence? And if, in spite of all, he did carry it off by violence, what a crime would he not commit?

Ah! if the affection issuing from the heart of a mere human being can raise a poor little animal, so as to give it an inviolable right, what does the love of God for man not accomplish, what dignity does it not give him, to what a height does it not raise him? Scientific men calculate the weight of the column of air that each one of us bears upon himself. Who shall say the burden of love which is over every child of Adam? Saint Paul speaks of an "immense weight of glory," which, without their being crushed or burdened by it, the elect carry in heaven (2 Cor. iv. 17), doubtless as we now carry a royal vestment or a diadem. This burden is only, and cannot but be, the last revelation, and the brightness of that other burden of Divine charity, which in this world forms, as it were, an atmospheric column of souls, and under which we live, and walk, and act. "My love is my weight," said Saint Augustine.* What does the Heart of a God weigh? Now this Heart, the Scripture says, is placed over man, upon man, upon all men, without exception (Job vii. 17). God does not only see us, He regards us; He does not limit Himself to hold us in His Hands, He embraces us; no one can find us, can approach us, nor touch us, outside of this regard and this embrace of our sweet Creator. It is there that we are when it is day, and there that we are when it is night; it is there that we are when temptation breaks in upon us; it is there that we are when our fellow-men converse with us, having it in their power to seduce us,

* Confess. lib. xiii., 19.

alas ! when they come to serve us. It is there that our liberty makes its choice ; and when this choice is bad, it is away from there that it tears us and casts us down. What a disorder ! what an evil ! what a misfortune ! Would you fall into it ? Do you think that you would fall into it, especially as we do fall, if everyone would keep the eye of the interior open, and never consider himself or anyone else outside of that immense and holy love which envelopes us and protects us, while it pays us honour ? And should we always keep this eye open and attentive, without the hand was kept reserved, without the heart remaining chaste ?

You may add to what I have already said, that this love of God for man is neither inactive nor sterile. God loves too ardently, not to be most desirous of rendering the being happy who is so dear to Him. Hence He creates for man a sublime destiny. They said of John Baptist, at the hour of his birth : "What an one, think ye, shall this child be ?" (St. Luke i. 66). It was an interrogation, but which implied a hope and the surmise for this new-born infant, of some marvellous destiny. We may say the same thing at every cradle. "What, think you, will this child be ?" If we pretend to divine his earthly future, we stumble over the unknown, and besides, it is not this which is of consequence. But if, waiting a little to have an answer, we ask the child itself—I mean, its freedom of action—we shall never have but a "perhaps ;" for on this matter all is uncertain. The most upright will may bend, the strongest purpose may prove abortive ; even to our last sigh the success of our life remains an open question. But on the side of love—of that love which goes before us, and which rules us ; on the side of the will of God, the reply is prompt and

precise. God has made us for Himself; He intends to have us with Him, and that we should see His light, and that we should live by His life, and that we should relish His joy, and that we should be illuminated with His glory, and that this glory should last beyond the bounds of time and change—should abide fully, peaceably, and for eternity. This body itself, which sin has made tributary to death, and which pays this inexorable debt, the tomb, so eager for its prey, cannot yet keep it for long : life will have satisfaction of death ; and out of that dust which has no name, because it has no form, and apparently has no substance, the body of man shall be raised full of life, of youth, of splendour, of immortality, to share in the glory and felicity of the soul. Such is for us the future ; such is our true destiny. Doubtless, I repeat once more, man may fail in attaining this destiny and be lost ; but if this happens, he himself, and he alone, will be to blame ; he will be to blame, because he will have willed this ruin, and he will have willed it in spite of God. Yes, if, since sin was committed, we cannot enter into heaven, without doing violence to ourselves (St. Matt. xi. 12), since Jesus Christ—that is, in reality, since the foundation of the world—no one has gone to hell without doing violence to God. God does not wish that His creatures should perish (Ezech. xviii. 31). He is their end, He Who is the Life ; eternally He will be so. No sun attracts its satellites so much to itself as God, the living Sun and the centre of the universe, attracts the beings He has created. We live, then, all of us, here upon earth, not only in the splendour of this Divine destiny, but also under the empire of this ineffable and efficacious attraction. This call, this attraction, is the foundation of things ; it is what happens in every place, during all

time and to all mankind; it is the principal work of those two Labourers of Whom our Lord said: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (St. John v. 17). I do not know, but it seems to me that these certitudes, which, for faith, are almost objects of sight, give so high an idea of man, and inundate him with a brightness, at once so ravishing and so fearful, that it becomes almost impossible for one who yields to their impressions—I do not say, to sully ever so little so favoured a Being, but not to have for Him an immense esteem, and not to render Him all kinds of honour.

More especially as all is not future here, God, Who exhorts man to rise betimes in the morning, Himself anticipates our day. He does not wait till reason wakes up in us, and gives us scope for the exercise of our free will; for Himself, for us, He is in haste; such is love, in getting the start of us, He takes His securities. It is not enough that He has the end: He must have the first-fruits; and as He will be our Omega, He wishes to be our Alpha also. You have already seen, that Baptism which ordinarily follows, and may always follow the hour of our birth, is the supernatural possession which God takes of His creature. It is the Divine seizure of man in the Name of Christ, and of His rights as our Redeemer. It marks the infant with a seal, interior, spiritual, sacred, divine, and which cannot be effaced; and this seal, is the very name of God, whose substance is impressed upon the infant: a Name full of Divine life, divinely vivifying—a name full of truth, a name instinct with grace. Man is by Baptism so entirely appropriated to God, that, compared with this new bond of connection, the other of which we spoke just now, and which we showed was so profound, seems to be as no-

thing. Judge of it yourselves. As regards God, they are "strangers," and, so to speak, barbarians, writes St. Paul, in describing those who are unbaptised, "strangers to the testaments," being aliens from the conversation of Israel, having no hope of the promise, and without God in the world (Ephes. ii. 12). And yet all that we have said remains true; it is the pure truth, and not a single iota can be taken from it. But what, then, is the relation which Baptism establishes between God and man?

Our entire destiny is there, in the state of a seed; another title, and a powerful title to our respect. Whom do we honour, whom do we take so much care of, as one who is about to become a mother? Now, every one who is baptised, carries a God in his breast. Glory is only the full bloom of grace—that is to say, of the Divine germ, which Baptism has deposited in this frail child of Adam. If the infant dies, what is done suffices; the harvest comes of itself, and ripens suddenly at the first rays of the eternal sun. If the infant lives, the seed remains confided to its care; he will often have to shelter it, and always to cultivate it, but it remains in him. It does more; it keeps incessantly growing more and more in the child, and, in proportion to its growth, it makes God to grow in it also. God Himself has begun this work; God also, though not God alone, intends to continue it, and to bring it to its final term. Man is divinely born; his growth will be Divine; and when the child wills it, or others will it for him (for had it only a day or an hour to live, every baptised child would be enriched with this gift), a new Sacrament will confer on it the manhood which corresponds with its birth, and the plenitude of that life which

baptism inaugurated. Yet this is not all; and who could tell all? Eternal in its origin, this supernatural life is subject in us to the conditions of time, and though all powerful in itself, this does not hinder it from contracting, in its relation to us, somewhat of our infirmity. In short, as in order that the natural life should be supported, it must have nourishment; so because it is Divine, its nourishment should be Divine also. The food of the Christian life is Christ—that is to say, God Himself. The Christian feeds on God in that Eucharist which he may, if he likes, receive every day. Behold, then, this being! You see him, doubtless, and at the same time you see him not; for God alone, who confers this dignity on man, is capable of taking its measure, and perhaps of forming a right conception of it. We do not speak of the other Sacraments, though, according to the saying of the Schools, all are for the good of man, and instituted for his sake; the Eucharist suffices. The Eucharist exists; man lives by the Eucharist. Were there no other reason for it, do not you see that this man is a consecrated being, and that therefore sin is execrable, especially the sin against chastity? Do not you see that chastity itself, that of the body, and that of soul, is the most imperious of duties? and that, being for us the most indispensable of the virtues, it ought to be the easiest? that it ought to flow from the source of our baptism, and of our communions? and that, in a word, if, among the virtues, there is one which, in its most exquisite and its most heroic perfection, is suitable to the superhuman state in which God has deigned to place us, assuredly it is the virtue of chastity. No, from the time that there is a tabernacle, and to this tabernacle a door, and behind this door a Host, and before this

Host a table, where we can feed on It, no one should be any longer astonished at the number of those who, for the love of God, wish to continue virgins ; the wonder is that, in each generation, their number is not countless. It was, besides, the vision of the Prophet, contemplating the times of the Messiah, that is the times of the Holy Eucharist : “ For holy stones shall be lifted up over His land ; for what is the good thing of Him, and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins ” (Zachar. ix. 17).

We have not, however, yet said all : from this Baptism, from this Eucharist, from all this mystery of grace, of love, and of Divine appropriation ; what more results ? We do not only become the property of Jesus, the images of Jesus ; we become also His members, and constitute His very Body. St. Paul tells us this expressly ; “ you are the Body of Christ ” (1 Cor. xii. 27) ; and elsewhere, “ do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ ? ” (1 Cor. vi. 15). Thus, you understand, it is the whole man, soul and body, which enters into the mystery of the Word Incarnate, and is united to it, as in us the body is united to the head. What the Fathers teach of this union is terrifying by reason of its boldness ; and yet it is the true doctrine. I have already quoted elsewhere that passage from Pope Leo, in which he says, “ The body of the baptised has become the flesh of the crucified.”* And St. Augustine, commenting on St. John, “ Wonder,” he exclaims, “ and be glad ; behold you are become Christ ! If He is the Head, we are the members ; He and we are but one and the same

* *Susceptus à Christo Christumque suscipiens non idem est post lavacrum qui ante baptismum fuit, sed corpus regenerati fit caro crucifixi.*—Serm. xiv., de Passione.

man, one whole man!"* We might cite a hundred similar passages.

The truth is, that we shall never know in this world in what a degree this union is real, strict, profound, and living, which binds us to Jesus, and makes us members of His Body. Because it is a mystical union, the feebleness of our understandings, and with many the weaknesses of their faith makes them too often conceive it to be something imaginary, or, at least, something vague and abstract, which has hardly any reality beyond the mind which thinks of it; now, the principle of this union, its active source, its support, its substance, is that Spirit Himself. Who, being in the adorable Trinity the union of the Father and of the Son, is, in the mystery of Christ, the appointed Worker of the unspeakable union of the Word with the Flesh, and therefore, of the conception of Christ in the chaste womb of Mary. Yes, the same Spirit Who effects the marvellous unity of this Body, of this Love and of this Word, Which is briefly called Jesus—this same Spirit, we say, and by means of the same power, and with a like vigour springing from the same love, and proceeding towards the same end, this same Spirit forms, in all of us, the union of our whole being with Christ, and thus effects the unity of His Mystical Body. My Saviour! if we forget this dogma, which is the triumph of Your mercy and the perfection of our glory—if, because our charity grows feeble, we only regard it at a distance, and through a thousand earthly phantoms, which lessen its grandeur and tarnish its beauty, Thou didst not forget it in the years of Thy life on earth. Thou didst not see it only

* *Admiramini, gaudete! Christus facti sumus: si enim caput ille, nos membra; totus homo ille et nos.*—Tract in Joann. Tr. xxi.

in the full light of that knowledge from which no secret thing is hidden, Thou didst see it by means of experience, and, as Saint Paul writes of Thy obedience: "Thou didst learn it to Thy own cost" (Heb. v. 8). Yes, when at Gethsemane a sweat of blood drenched Thy whole Body, when in the Prætorium the pitiless scourging rent in shreds Thy holy Flesh, when, especially on the Cross, drowned in an ocean of sufferings, and forcing Yourself on to those extreme limits, when pain is compelled to expire in the arms of death, Thou didst say: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps. xxi. 1); when Thou didst add immediately: "But it is just; for I bear on Myself the iniquity of the world, and those sins which I have taken on Myself all cry out that it is fitting Thou should treat Me thus, and keep Me at a distance" (Ps. xxi. 1). Then, Oh, love of souls! Oh, victim! Oh, Jesus! Thou knewest, Thou didst feel, all Thy Being felt, how true, how living, and how real, is that union between Thee and Thy sinful members; that incorporation with Thee of all culpable humanity, and that dreadful responsibility jointly incurred between Thee and us! Now, what is the moral consequence of this union, and of all that we have now explained—the rigorous, immediate, unavoidable consequence? Everyone may see it; but as it proceeds from a principle, so high and so holy, the Holy Spirit Himself has willed to declare it in the words of Saint Paul, and with what energy does He declare it? "Shall I, then, take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot?" (1 Cor. vi. 15). The act of impure vice is henceforth a sacrilege: ought we not to conclude from this that all the grace of Christianity is summed up in chastity?

Besides, when you understand still better the astonish-

ing dignity to which this grace raises you, you will also understand with what rigid care you must preserve this virtue, and with what perfection you should practise it. As Christ our Lord, by uniting Himself to us, truly takes on Him our weaknesses, and even the semblance also, of our faults, we have a share in His graces, in His states, in His relations—in a word, in all that He was as Man, and in all that He is as God. We belong to Him, He belongs to us; we are in Him, He is in us: it is what weread in many pages of the Holy Gospel.

First of all, and principally, Jesus Christ is the abode of God. “In Him,” says St. Paul, “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, corporally” (Coloss. ii. 9), that is to say, according to the explanation of St. Thomas, “really, substantially, totally. . . His Holy Humanity is the throne of this Divinity, it is the sanctuary and the temple of God.” Then, according to your rank, your measure of grace, below Christ, on account of Christ, by means of Christ, but as Christ, you are also this temple, this sanctuary, and this throne of God. . . “Do not you know,” says again our admirable Apostle (on whom there seems to devolve the privilege of throwing light on all these Divine ways), “do not you know that you are the temples of the Holy Spirit Who is in you?” (1 Cor. vi. 19). Thus, we are all true temples; temples, not only dedicated to God, but inhabited by God. Now, this temple, Tertullian teaches us, has a guardian, which is also a priestess, that is, chastity, and it inderdicts the entrance into it, of all that is impure and profane.* He

* Cum omnes templum Dei simus, illato in nos et consecrato Spiritu Sancto, ejus templi ædituus et antistes pudicitia est, quæ nihil immundum nec profanum inferri sinat, ne Deus ille qui inhabitat, inquinatam sedem offensus derelinquat.—Tertull. De Cultu Fœminarum, lib. ii., cap. i.

says, that having to guard this temple, chastity fulfils the functions of priestess, because mere respect in this matter is not sufficient, nor can we be satisfied with mere deference, or caution ; there must be a true religion, and acts of worship : the chastity required is one with sanctity. The House of God is to be holy, and "holiness becometh Thy House, O Lord, unto length of days" (Ps. xcii. 5). Ah ! if, referring to the ancient tabernacle in which God only dwelt in figure, the spirit yet said : "Reverence My sanctuary" (Levit. xxvi. 2); if the heights of that Sinai, where God only appeared in the person of an angel, burst forth with "burning fire" on whomsoever dared approach them, what shall we say of those living temples of the living God, who are the members of the Holy Church, because they are first the members of Jesus? Therefore it is, that if, unhappily, anyone violate the temple of God, him shall God undoubtedly destroy (1 Cor. iii. 17).

But not only does the Christian participate in the states of Christ, he enters also into His relations, especially the relation of His Holy Humanity, with the Three Divine Persons.

And first, as Christ is, so is the Christian, the son of God, having the right to say to God, "My Father," and, having received the Spirit of God to say it with effect, and, at the same time, with truth (Rom. viii. 15). Yes, "we are born not of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God" (St. John i. 13); "of His own will, begotten by the word of truth" (St. James i. 18), receiving by this generation His life, with His Name ; a life, which, so long as it dwells in us and reigns in us, which it has the right to do, hinders us from ever sinning (1 St. John v. 18), and keeping us in innocence, makes us to walk in sanctity. "God is light" (St. John i. 5):

sons of God, we are then sons of light (1 Thess. v. 8); and, as St. Paul writes, "light in the Lord" (Ephes. v. 8). What fellowship, then, is possible between this light, which we are, and that darkness which we have been? (2 Cor. vi. 14). Do we light a lamp, to hide it under a bushel? (St. Matt. v. 15). Do we become a star of heaven to remain prostrate on the earth? Are we made partakers of the Divinity to live the life of fools? (Ps. xiii. 21). Such a birth as ours, obliges us to a life corresponding thereto. For us to go back in such a matter, is a crime of such magnitude, that it ought to be unheard of, if not wholly impossible. We are the sons of God; we should walk in this world then, with an upright and firm step, our loins girt, our eyes open, our soul on high, we should work in truth, accomplish justice, and, in fine, live, as the Scripture tells us, in a manner worthy of God (Coloss. i. 10); we should be the children of light in our outward conduct, children of light also within, in all aspects we should be the children of light, by our doctrine, in our behaviour, by our works; not thinking of, nor loving anything, nor wishing, nor doing anything which God may not look upon with favour, which may not attract His notice, anything in which He may not take complacency, and in which He may not find a joy. What is this in reality, but to say, that every child of God should be in body, in heart, and in spirit, chaste? "O how beautiful," exclaims the wise man, "is the chaste generation with glory!" (Wisd. iv. 1). Light, chastity, the Divine life, the Christian life, in the eyes of God, is all one.

We are the children of the Father: and what are we of the Son? His Spouses. "The kingdom of God," says the Gospel, "is like unto a king who made a marriage

for his son" (St. Matt. xxii. 2). God wishes to espouse all humanity in faith (Osee. ii. 20). He makes known to us this design in the Scriptures, and this is why He sends us His Son. Christ is the Spouse, and He comes as Spouse (St. John iii. 29). It is He, Who is the Life (St. John xiv. 16); He wishes that we should have this life, and have it in abundance (St. John x. 10). He gives it in giving Himself; it is that which makes us live; and He gives us also the abundance of it, in order that every receptacle of life should become a source of life. Whoever enters into the family, is capable of propagating it. In uniting man to the Word, faith purifies Him (Acts xv. 9); in vivifying this faith, and in sealing this union, charity makes man fruitful. In brief, every creature, supernaturalised, adopted, deified by faith, becomes the Sister of Christ, and when her faith blossoms into love, this Sister becomes a Spouse: "My Sister, my Spouse," says the Word, in the Canticle of Canticles (Cant. iv. 9).

There are, doubtless, here degrees—they are countless. They answer precisely to the degrees of love, and perhaps they are as many as the souls who love. Whatever may be in other respects the state of mankind, and the relations which man establishes upon earth, when once a soul is in grace with God, it is the Spouse of Jesus Christ; "for the Spouse," says Saint Bernard, "is every soul that loves."* She, then, who has thought it good to give to one of the sons of the human family this sacred name of Husband, has not, on account of that, lost the right of calling her Saviour by the same title. However, it is evident that those states of life, which, of themselves, throwing open a more free and ample field

* *Sponsæ nomine censetur anima quæ amat.*—Serm. vii. in Cant.

for charity, are, besides, in those who are vowed to it, the proof of a resolution to love God more, and, indeed, of a greater actual love of Him—it is evident, I say, that these states establish between the soul and Jesus a closer, more holy, and indissoluble bond of union. As the essence of all conjugal union consists in its being free and voluntary, the more there is of this free will in each of the contracting parties, the more their union is complete and perfect. Now, on the side of the Divine Spouse Who calls, this vocation to virginity, whether sacerdotal or religious, is the consummation of grace, and therefore of love. God wishes for nothing so much as these bonds between His creature and Himself; and when they are formed, there is nothing on which His Heart reposes with so much happiness. If He does not exact them by an express commandment, it is only an additional mark of the price at which He values them; for who does not know, that among those who love, nothing is generally desired with so much passion, as that of which the desire even is not expressed; they consider that this desire is only then fully satisfied, if he who is the object of it does not show, by anticipating it, that he had guessed it. And, as regards the creature who thus espouses her Lord, could she give Him more? No, since the alliance she forms, positively excludes all others; and that, besides, like that holy city of which the Scripture speaks, which has “her foundations on the holy hills” (Ps. lxxxvi. 1), this union, knit by a perpetual vow, is thus established beyond the sphere of things which pass away, and is exempted from the chances, even, of any change of mind. Nothing, in the order of these unions with God, can be compared with this sacred contract, which, in presence and under the guarantee of that great wit-

ness, which is the Church, marries to Jesus Christ a soul vowed to chastity. Thus, such is the eminence of the degree in which these souls become His Spouses, that in the usual language of Christians this name is appropriated and almost reserved for them. To them it belongs to have the full intelligence of what is said to others in parables (St. Luke viii. 10); to them it is given to enter into the cellars of the King (Cant. i. 4); to them it is allotted to follow the Lamb wherever He goeth, and to sing that new canticle, of which they alone know the melody (Apocal. xiv. 4).

You see how every Christian soul, but more excellently, every religious soul, is constituted at once Spouse of the Son—that is, at once Spouse of the Word, like the Holy Humanity, and Spouse of Christ, like Mary and the Church; for these are two aspects of this one marriage. At first, the soul enters, after a certain manner, into the mystery of the hypostatic union, source, and type of every union effected by grace; but further, on its part and in its measure, it becomes the Eve of the Heavenly Adam, “a help like unto Himself” (Gen. ii. 18), associated to His human life, to His mysteries, to His labours, to His sufferings, to His Priesthood, to His sacrifice. The soul is like to Him, and, so to speak, equally shares with Him the office of witness and envoy of the Father, Minister of grace and eternal life, victim of religion, of redemption, of sanctification—in a word, in all the force, and according to the full meaning of this word, she is His Spouse, and so much the more, as she has quitted more for Him, and as she has left all things to attach herself to Him.

Do not you feel, then, what a bond like this supposes, demands, orders, exacts, of chastity, whether of the body

or of the spirit? Chastity in this matter assumes the character of fidelity—of fidelity of the heart, which, in many respects, surpasses that of the conscience ; and of conjugal fidelity, which, among all the fidelities of the heart, appears to be the most sacred. And thence it comes, that the act of impurity, which we have already said is a sacrilege, becomes a real adultery, and is committed towards Jesus Christ. But speaking only, by the way, of a crime so detestable, and which it is hardly permitted to name in the assembly of the Saints, how is it that this conviction of being the Spouse of the Son of God, of the Son of the Virgin, of Christ Jesus our Lord, the Model and King of Virgins, does not compel us to walk in the ways of chastity, if especially we have vowed a chastity which is complete and perpetual?

“She that is married,” says St. Paul, “thinketh of God and of her husband.” This is natural, and rather commanded than interdicted ; but because of this, “she is divided,” and it is her state, to be so. On the contrary, she who is unmarried, and a virgin, the Bride of Christ, may and ought to think only of the interests of God, and to relish only “the things of God,” and to apply herself only to the affairs of God. She has no other anxiety than that of pleasing Him, that she may be holy in body and in spirit, and advance every day in this double sanctity (1 Cor. vii. 34). In the order of what is joyous and delightful, the Spouse is to her everything. As, by the vow of poverty, Jesus has become to her all her fortune, so, when she has vowed also chastity, He becomes all her joy. She keeps herself for Him ; except for Him, and all that comes from Him, and that leads to Him, she wishes nothing else upon earth. Doubtless the Spouse is absent from her sight, and in this respect

she is a widow ; but this widowhood is only apparent, since, far from being dead, her Spouse is full of life, of life, radiant and immortal, she is at most a widow only so far as the senses are concerned. She does not see, she does not hear, she cannot touch Him Whom she loves ; she only possesses Him by faith, she rejoices in Him only by hope ; but, far from complaining of this, she triumphs in it, for she draws from this very condition, with the exercise of a chastity more valiant, and more meritorious, the precious occasion of showing that she has for Him, Who has her heart, a more disinterested love. Yes, rather would she dispense with all joy in this world than—I don't say beg it (God forbid), but receive it from any creature whatever, regarded simply as a creature—that is to say, without reference to God, and especially rather than have any joy which is sensual. What does it matter to her ? Everything passes away, except Him, the sole object of her love ; she knows what He is, where He is, and that, without fail, and soon, He will come and appear ; she awaits Him there in peace, and, while waiting, she lives entirely devoted to Him Whom she hopes for ; she contemplates Him, she admires Him, she strives to merit Him, she labours to be like Him. She has read that “ He is a lily, and feedeth among the lilies ” (Cant. ii. 16), that is to say, that, being true God as He is, He lives only on victims, victims pure and without spot, and this is what she always wishes to be herself, that she may always be a festival and a delight to Him. Will she ever offend her Spouse ? Perhaps ; though sincere, she is so frail ! though she lives, she is so tempted ! But if she forgets herself, if she turns aside, if she falls, hardly is the fault perceived, but drowned in so many tears, that she appears

afterwards to be still more beautiful than if she had never wept.

All contributes to render her pure, and she takes care to make all work together for this end. Purity attracts her, a universal purity, a Divine purity; she feels that here no excess is possible, and she will never attain to that purity which she has desired. She lives, then, on desire, on aspiration; her peace is her labour. She purifies her body and her senses, by rendering them daily more dependent on the spirit; so much so, that even upon earth, as St. Cyprian writes, "This body begins to borrow somewhat of that spiritual and glorified state promised to the just, when they have risen from the dead."* She purifies her conscience by scrupulously avoiding even the shadow of evil, and not leaving for an instant the least weakness unpunished. She purifies her intelligence by the continual exercise of faith, the constant application to spiritual realities, and the courageous renouncement of every remembrance, of every thought, of every occupation which does not lead to this end. In a word, she purifies her heart and her soul by rendering herself free at any cost, and by keeping herself holily detached from all creatures, and especially from herself, for she knows that in this consists the perfection of purity, because it is the supreme demand of love, and the condition of her full liberty. "I have, by my vows, put off my garment—that is to say, my earthly life," she says, with the Great Bride of the Cantic of Canticles; "how shall I take it again?" "I have washed my feet, and how

* Quod futuri sumus jam vos esse cœpistis. Vos resurrectionis gloriam in isto sæculo jam tenetis; per sæculum sine sæculi contagione transitis.—St. Cypr. De Habitu Virginum, cap. 22.

shall I defile them?" (Cant. v. 3). "Ah! rather my hands shall drop with myrrh, and my fingers shall be full of the choicest myrrh" (Cant. v. 5). You see, then, under these sweet and transparent symbols, the chaste, virginal, and divinely embalmed life of a true Spouse of Jesus Christ.

It is thus that the marriage of souls with the Son of God is rightly, for them all, the motive of an eminent chastity; and, in fact, it is the source of it, at least, for all faithful souls. Yes, the source, and it is this which, while perfecting grace in us, raises Christian and religious chastity to its highest level.

Every Bridegroom, besides giving himself, brings a dowry to his Bride. The dowry, which at first is a sign of love, is afterwards a resource for their support, sometimes the only resource. The Bridegroom, or rather the union with the Bridegroom, makes the house happy; the dowry makes it comfortable, whence come security and peace. When the Word espoused His Humanity, He kept this custom, or rather this law of marriages; He brought His dowry with Him. We explained it at the commencement of this work.* This dowry consists of those graces, those gifts, those qualities, those energies, those supernatural possessions, those many beauties, and those many unknown gifts with which this blessed Humanity was adorned from its conception; it is of It, in truth, that it is said in the Proverbs, "Many have gathered together riches; but Thou hast surpassed them all" (Prov. xxxi. 29). But that was not sufficient: to a union so transcendent, as to be absolutely exceptional, there ought to correspond also gifts both transcendent and exceptional. Where the Bridegroom was personally God, and

* Vol. I. Treatise I., part the 2nd, on the Christian Life.

where, by consequence, the union was all Divine, the dowry should be wholly Divine also ; and created gifts, whatever they might be, did not answer, as it was fitting they should, either to the love of such a Bridegroom, or to the dignity of His happy Bride, or to the life which, by the fact of their union, she was to live with Him and for Him. So that, as all the Fathers and Doctors assert, what the Word truly gave as dowry to His Humanity, was the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from Him as from the Father, and Who is substantially the fulness of sanctity (Acts x. 38).* This was the life-giving and infinite unction with which He anointed this Nature which He borrowed ; this was the treasure which He appropriated to it, this was the inexhaustible resource which He gave to it, in order to live in this world, and to perform all His works. Whence it comes that in possessing Himself, and Himself alone, as to the hypostatic union, this holy Humanity, the Word never operated or caused this, nor sacred Humanity to operate, except through His Holy Spirit. The Scripture says this several times in explicit terms, particularly as to our Lord's going into the desert (St. Luke iv. 1), and as to His oblation on the Cross (Heb. ix. 14). But it was the same in all His acts, and it is a matter of which theologians have no doubt, that our Lord did nothing as Man, but by the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and in dependence upon Him.

Now this mystery of the dowry is co-extensive with the union. We also, in espousing the Word, receive all kinds of created graces ; it must be so, because otherwise all our powers remaining purely human, we should

* Dominus ipse Jesus Spiritum Sanctum non solum dedit ut Deus, sed etiam accepit ut homo.—Aug. De Trinit. lib. xv., c. 26.

be incapable of treating supernaturally with God, of seeing Him, of hearing Him, of sharing His life, of acting as He acted, and of giving Him glory. All our being, then, is adorned, enriched, filled with these supernatural gifts, which are like the jewels with which our Heavenly Bridegroom decorates us.* But this does not wholly satisfy His love for us, His members, nor indeed does it satisfy His love for His own Humanity. In a measure, doubtless, and after a manner, much less perfect, yet real, He brings us, and settles on us this sublime dowry, which is His Divine Spirit. At the same time that we have the fruits, we have the root ; with the created gifts, we receive the gift which is uncreated ; with the gifts of His love, we possess love itself ; so that by Jesus, in Jesus, and as Jesus, we have in us, and belonging to us, the Holy Spirit, Who becomes our Spirit, our own and characteristic Spirit ; according as it is written, "he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17), and elsewhere, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9) ; and, on the contrary, true Christians, the true brethren of Christ and His members, the true children of the Father, they are those whom the Spirit of God animates and governs (Rom. viii. 14). Such, then, thanks to Jesus Christ, is our regular relation with this Third and Adorable Divine Person, Who unites the Two from Whom He proceeds, and terminates in the Divinity, the eternal evolution of that life which is all being. We are not only here His Abode and His Temple ; we become His means, His agents, His organs. The Holy Spirit is in

* It is of these gifts St. Agnes spoke when she said, "He has ornamented me with countless jewels : immensis monilibus ornavit me."

us, as the living and permanent foundation of our supernatural state, and He becomes in it the principle of all the works which this holy state ought to produce. It is this which our Lord calls "a fountain of water, which from the depths of our being springs up into life everlasting" (St. John iv. 14).

This presence constitutes our strength, but most clearly this strength creates for us a duty. What duty? Always the same, but more imperious, more urgent, it is also more easy than ever; the duty of being chaste, pure, virgins, heavenly, holy, and truly Divine in our whole being, in all our thoughts, in all our affections, in all our wills, in all that we say or do; the duty of never acting, whether outwardly or inwardly, under the influence of irregular passions, but also of nature isolated from grace; the duty of being in everything, always, and at all risks, docile to that Spirit which is in us only to reign over us; the duty, in short, "of always doing everything in God" (St. John iii. 21), according to the sublime saying of our Lord; that is to say, in their coming from God as our first beginning, finishing in God as our last end; and in keeping ourselves with exactitude in God, in the thoughts and wishes of God, as our law and our model. In this consists perfect chastity, a state of soul which is constant, writes St. Augustine, which keeps it so well in order that in it the superior part never submits to the inferior, but, on the contrary, the Divine invariably regulates the human.*

God having decreed that His Word should live on

* *Castitas est ordinatus animi motus, non subdens magna minoribus.*—Lib. De Mendacio, cap. xx. St. Augustine speaks here of a *movement*, because, in his thought, the question is of the act of chastity. But the virtue itself, which produces this act, and gives to it its moral character, is a habit, and therefore constitutes a *state*.

earth in a human form, willed that He should be born and brought up by a virgin. This mystery of grace and union extending to all Christians, and making of each of them a true Christ, it seemed necessary that everyone who was baptised should have, like Himself, a virgin for mother and nurse. After Mary, after the Church, this Divine mother, and this indispensable nurse of Christians, you know now is chastity.

We have attempted to tell you what Catholic theology teaches on the state and qualities of that Being Who is at once the subject and the object of chastity. What does Catholic theology teach us of the nature, of the perfections, and of the attractions of that God Whose love is the formal reason, whether of the ordinary chastity which He commands, or of the perfect chastity which He counsels and inspires, at the same time that He gives to them both their Christian character, their eternal scope, and their heavenly value? This is the subject which, by the aid of Divine grace, we shall now enquire into.

II.

Every act which is a violation of chastity comes in principle from a corruption of the heart. Doubtless, when the heart gives way and forgets itself under the charm of the evidence it gives, and which it ought always to rule and regulate, as the free reason of man rules and regulates his discourse—when love, become covetousness, delivers the soul up to be wholly a prey to the ignoble tyranny of the senses, and that, in consequence, the life of instinct taking precedence of the will, determines the choice and the actions, then there are faults of impurity in which the heart counts for nothing, and these are

naturally those which are the most grave and the most shameful. But the first false step—the first falls that are made in this path, have for their ordinary cause a love which has gone astray. It is not without a profound reason, that considered under one of its principal aspects, chastity is called continence. Its office, in fact, and therefore its virtue, is to keep our love within bounds, which is to keep within bounds our whole soul, since love is its weight, and where its love goes the soul follows.* To keep our love within bounds, you understand, is to preserve it in its place, which is a place on high, to preserve it in its integrity, to keep it within the limits of the law, and to allow it to act only for its own end, and in its proper sphere. Such is the work of chastity ! It does not hold the soul, as one body holds another, but in the way the spirit holds the body—that is to say, inwardly and from on high : precisely as our soul contains our body, being its unity, and the conspicuous, intimate, central force, which hinders its dissolution, and its turning to dust, which only happens when the soul has left it. Now, what is it that troubles this order ? What is it that makes the heart escape from the sovereign dominion of continence, and then, being no longer continent, it goes astray, becomes dissipated, and perishes, causing us, alas ! to perish with it ? The history of prodigal hearts is too frequent among men not to be well known. That which lures away the heart and wrests it from chastity, is either a beauty which has seduced it, or a love which has wounded it, or a joy, the feeling or the presentiment of which intoxicates it. These three causes are often united ; but there are no other kinds of irregularity besides these.

* *Eo feror quocumque feror.*—S. August. Conf. lib. xiii. cap. 9.

Now, if God is perfect beauty, infinite love, and absolute joy—if the soul knows this, if it can be convinced of it at every moment, and have that certitude of it which has almost the force of evidence, is it possible that its chastity should run the risk of perishing? Is not this chastity even extended to the counsels and sealed by a vow? Is it not, I say, a duty so moving, so pressing, so noble, and, at the same time, so sweet, that it loses, so to speak, the form of an obligation, to take that of a deliverance, and that in practising it, one seems less to practise a virtue, than to profit by a gift and relish a grace? Saint Thomas insinuates this when he says that the principal reason of spiritual chastity, and consequently its great light, its radical force, its supreme law, its life, the principle of its constancy, of its splendour, and of its fruitfulness, come from the theological virtues, and especially charity.*

Well, first of all, what is our God—the God of our reason, the God of our faith—if not the source and ocean of all beauty, the Being from Whom all beauty comes, the Being in Whom all beauty subsists—is He not, in a word, beauty itself?

Strange condition of man upon earth! If there is in him a passion which is natural, deep, intense, it is certainly love for the beautiful. The beautiful takes hold of him, seizes him, ravishes him out of himself—not that every order of beauty strikes all mankind alike; but there is no man, in presence of that beauty which his nature and his education render him capable of appreciating, who does not feel a charm which overcomes him, and who does not experience, with the delicious stupour which constitutes admiration, that interior expression

* Summa 2da, 2dæ.—Quæst. cli., art. 2.

which we call joy. We have only to see his face at the moment of these impressions; that face is then lighted up, and sometimes is even transformed, as if it were the property of beauty, that we can never see it without reflecting ourselves something of its loveliness.

This innate love of the beautiful is one of the characteristics of our human nature. It alone suffices to class us scientifically far above the brute, which is utterly incapable of it. But it does more and better still than this; it is a basis, a standpoint on which we may raise ourselves, even to God, and we cannot but see in it, in reality, one of those many manifestations of our radical aptitude for union with Him. It is more than an ornament, it is a means, a mark of our origin; it points out to us the end of our being, and urges us on in the way that leads to it; for, in a word, when we consider these natural forms of which the universe is full, forms many of which are ravishing, and none of which is without its beauty, reason itself tells us they are only the signs which speak to us of the existence of higher realities, and which are, on that very account, more perfect. The forms of art, which try to imitate these forms of nature, are but the expression of an ideal conceived by an intelligent mind. What, then, are the works of the Divine Artist but the signs of His thoughts? The Holy Spirit tells us this in the Book of Wisdom: "With whose beauty, if they, being delighted, took them to be gods, know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they, for the first Author of beauty made all these things. . . . for by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them (analogically) may be seen, so as to be known thereby" (Wisd. xiii. 3—5).

Thus all outward beauty is only a sort of witness

which God renders of Himself—a veil under which He is concealed, a shadow of His beneficent presence, an appeal from His voice, a bait His own Hand throws to us, a sweet and tender exhortation—I was going to say, a sigh of love for us, that He suffers to escape from His Divine Heart, especially as, without having learnt it, we all know that the beautiful is the form of the good; whence it comes that we do not admire it only, but we love it, and this attraction is added to the other, as if, the better to manifest Himself, and the better to secure us by every created beauty, under which He offers Himself to us, God stretched out both His arms to us at once.

Alas ! alas ! and once more alas ! for it is the deep sorrow of the earth, and the shame of humanity, the help becomes the hindrance, the allurements are changed into poison, creatures are to us a snare. That which should show us God, is precisely what shuts Him from our view ; what manifested Him to us, leads us to forget Him ; what at first gave Him to us, is made the occasion of our losing Him—in a word, the great and too often the successful rival of the supreme and eternal beauty, is the least, and most ephemeral of all beauties, that of the body. But there is in this, a disorder, the horrible frequency of which does not excuse its injustice, nor cloak its absurdity. In reality, this disorder is against nature, and does violence to our reason, even before it outrages our faith. Creatures remain, by right, the revelations of God, and also they perform the office of ambassadors, and this right becomes a fact, for everyone of good will.

Follow then, your nature, I mean, that which is good, which God has made, and which sin has not been able to unmake and wholly destroy. Follow especially your

grace, which being at first a movement which came from God, becomes for you an impulse towards God, at the same time that it places in you, a Divine power to know it. Sure of being powerfully assisted by Him, since you only seek Him, because He seeks you, and desires more ardently to disclose Himself to you, than you desire to contemplate Him, go to all those places of meeting which He assigns you; and there, humbly, patiently, amorously, study His Beauty. Though His Face is hidden, and must remain so for the present, so many rays escape from it, that it will end by your being no longer a total stranger. And if He Himself declares, as we read in the Holy Writings, that it is His Beauty especially that assures Him dominion (Ps. xciv. 5), it is then because those hearts among us which He has conquered, have had at least a glimpse of it. Does not the Spouse in the Canticles say in speaking of Him, Behold, He standeth behind our wall? "looking through the windows, looking through the lattices" (Cant. iv. 9). Perhaps this wall is a rampart, perhaps it is but a trellis, but even if it is a rampart, it is a rampart open here and there, since by the witness of the Holy Spirit, God regards us through these apertures. Who knows then, if one day, our eyes may not meet His? Not being able to see Him clearly here below, what a blessing is it for us to perceive something of Him? What work already done for love, and what a centre, what a spur, what a defence for chastity!

Study, then, the beauty of God, first in this visible world, which surrounds you, and where it shines in every part. See it in the splendour of the day, in the profound and majestic peace of the night, in the earth so adorned and so rich, in the ocean so vast, in the expanse of the firmament, and in the prodigious, and silent movements

of the stars which people it : see it still more radiant in that unspeakable harmony of all things which makes the union of all varieties, the agreement of all contrasts, so that disorder itself is but the servant of order, and all things, in a word, mutually attract, enchain, embrace, and perfect one another, so that the whole creation is but one vast concert. Do not fear in making this study, that the sight of sensible things should lead you astray, or give you a distraction : when you seek in it, God, purely and sincerely, nature will be for you only what it is in itself, holy and sanctifying ; and not only while contemplating it, you will remain virgins in spirit and in heart, but in proportion as you see it more thoroughly, you will become more virgins than before.

However, pass over and beyond this elementary world, which, according to the Christian philosophy, is only, as it were, the footprints of God : however beautiful appear all the creatures it contains, compared with the Divine Beauty, they are only like that of Jesus and Mary, compared with their blessed footprints on the sands of Palestine. Mount up in thought, even to those spiritual beings, who, being nearer to God, are as His shadows, His mirrors, or even His images. Notwithstanding the most certain and the most precious lights which Catholic theology gives us on the nature and the state of the Angels, you will, perhaps, find it difficult to consider God in these magnificent and blessed Spirits. If it was granted you to see God reflected in the least among them, you would have a knowledge of Him, very superior to that which the complete knowledge of the material world would give you. But at least, regard God in a way more on a level with your comprehension, in souls, in your own, and in those of your brethren. What

master-works ! What a book ! What a divine manifestation ! I am speaking of their nature, but still more of the grace they have received, of their state, of their life, of the history of the graces they have received ; and what will be the history of their glory ? Regard God in the souls of the Saints, of the patriarchs, of the apostles, of the martyrs, of the confessors, of the virgins. Regarding Him at first in each one of them separately, contemplate Him then, in the incomparable society of all of them when united. You will see that the beauty of those living and loving heavens, unspeakably surpasses that of the Heaven we see above us.

Having done this, do not stop : piously endeavour to consider God in Himself, study the beauty of His intelligence : is not that also a form of beauty which has the power of charming you ? The greatness and the astonishing multiplicity of the Divine works, the knowledge they unfold, the marvellous art which they display, the wise and mighty laws which regulate them all, the simplicity, the tranquillity, the inflexibility, yet always sweet, of the government of the universe, and particularly of those beings who have free will, all will doubtless give you some idea of this incomprehensible intelligence. . . Study in the same way the beauty of the character of God, another aspect of marvellous beauty, which may well transport you ; and to this end, turn over in your mind what you know of the personal acts of this adorable God, of His conduct, of what the Scripture calls His ways, of what we may well name His habits, and finally, of all His different ways of existing, of living, of acting with regard to the little and the great, to the weak and to the strong, to sinners and to the just, to His friends and to His enemies, with regard to all. What nature is for His

Works, the Holy Writings, and all the supernatural history of humanity, are for His characters ; they are, as it were, two editions, or rather two parts of the same Bible, the great Bible of the Divinity. The first of these revelations enables us to see in the intellectual order something which is infinitely superior to genius ; the second, discovers to us something in the moral order, which immeasurably surpasses heroism. When we speak of genius, we think of bright flashes, of rapid illuminations, of sudden intuition. And so, when we speak of heroism, the word wakens up in our mind the idea of striking, surprising and extraordinary actions. There is nothing of this in God : intelligence and character, all is inexpressibly sublime, but it is also simple, normal, one, continuous, peaceable : all comes from Himself, all rests in Himself, all continues firm, all remains steadfast and unchangeable ; and it is of this St. James has written : “ Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration ” (St. James i. 17), much less is there any effort, or what resembles any kind of labour whatsoever.

Then study, one by one, those innumerable Divine perfections which our nature and the weakness of our understanding force us to distinguish, although reason itself makes us see even to evidence that they are really all the same and identical, being only that one perfection which is God Himself. You will not reflect a moment without comprehending that each is for us a treasure, and, as it were, a particular world of beauty, as well as of truth, of goodness, and of life ; that each is a particular aspect of the absolute beauty, and, as it were, one of the features of the face of God. For you do not doubt, I

think, that God has a physiognomy, a face. Are there not many passages of the Scripture which speak of His Face and of His Countenance, and must evidently be understood of the entire appearance of His Being, of all that we see when we see Him? And how could it be that He, Who gives every creature its particular form, should have no form proper to Himself? He has one, believe me; and so determined, so remarkable, that it distinguishes Him infinitely from all that is not Himself, even from that which most resembles Him in His works. Certainly, God is a pure Spirit: yet we shall greatly deceive ourselves if we imagine that His beauty is only *moral*, in the sense that we commonly attach to that word. God has a physical beauty,* and logically this beauty is the first in Him, for He is only beautiful in what He creates, because that, first of all, He is beautiful in what He is in Himself. Ah, poor children of Adam, exhaust yourselves in dreaming of perfect features, of graceful outlines, of fascinating colours, of degrees of every shade delicately toned, of sweet harmonies connecting the different parts in one delightful whole; mount up to the height of the sensible ideal, beyond so many master-works of which nature or art has offered the spectacle to your sight, without forgetting this abstract from them, what is always and fatally imperfect: penetrate yourselves, then, with the indisputable truth, that if all these things exist independent of you, or even in you, I mean in your intelligence, and

* It is idle to explain that here the word *physical* is taken in its etymological sense, and therefore has the same meaning as *natural*. The question is of natural beauty, and the property of that Being Who is God: beauty, all spiritual as He is; but, like Himself, very real; and which does not result at all from the nature or moral character of His acts.

if they are admirable, it is because the type of them is in God ; because God is their supreme and perfect model—so much so, that, on seeing Him in heaven, you will have all those accumulated ravishments which the separated, or united, elements of sensible beauty have given you in this world, and other ravishments also, a thousand times more delicious, of which you have now neither the idea nor the surmise. David says of it : “ You shall be satisfied ” (Ps. xvi. 15)—filled and overflowing with admiration, with love, and with happiness ; for you shall be in the presence of a beauty beyond comparison ; the beauty which is true, faithful, adequate, the beautiful form of absolute perfection. You shall behold a splendour unspeakable, and unspeakably sweet ; an exquisite purity, a grace without example, a harmony which shall be full and immense ; a perfect unity, harmony and unity combined, the symphony of unity, harmonic unity ; a unity which is living, essential, eternal, infinite ; blooming infinitely, and blooming in itself : and this is beauty.* Is it too high ? Is it inaccessible ? It is not at least inaccessible to faith, to prayer, or to love ; it is not inaccessible at least to virgins, to whom are permitted certain looks, of which the crowd are not capable ; and yet, if now it is too high for you, be neither discouraged nor sad. What is shut from your view in the morning may be opened at night ; what is beyond your reach to-day you may arrive at perhaps to-morrow. But though, until the unknown hour when you shall “ enter into the powers of God ” (Ps. lxx. 16), this divine world should be entirely interdicted you, God will not, for all that, have left you without resource in

* *Omnis pulchritudinis forma unitas.*—S. Agn. Epist. 81, al. 63, ad Cœlest.

your innate desire of finding in this present life a higher beauty, which, by fixing your heart, shall be a safeguard to your chastity. God was made flesh, and thenceforth to eternity He is Flesh. The Personal Beauty of God, which is His Word, He Whom the Scripture calls "the image of His goodness," "the brightness of eternal light," "the splendour of His Glory and the figure of His Substance" (Heb. i. 3), the Eternal Son of the Father, was seen upon earth ; He was made man, like unto us, and He dwelt among us. Regard God, then, in that authentic place where He comes, for this very reason, to be seen ; regard Him through the Humanity of Jesus, which is too possessed with the Divinity, too holy, too pure not to be most transparent. Ah ! it is this sacred Humanity which is the lattice of the Canticles, the lattice behind which God, present and living, looks at us, speaks to us, and treats with us (Cant. ii. 9). Neither nature, nor art, nor the apparition of an Angel, would reveal God to you, would explain God like this sacred Humanity. It is true that you do not see It with the eyes of the body ; you have never seen It thus. Do not complain, believe me, and do not envy His contemporaries on earth so much. How many saw Jesus physically, who neither admired, nor loved, nor recognised Him ! "The flesh profiteth nothing" (St. John vi. 63). He is, indeed, "beautiful among the children of men" (Ps. xlv. 3), beautiful, so as only God can be beautiful, and we cannot understand why it has been sometimes doubted. But this beauty was too holy, to be perceived indifferently by the eyes of all men, as it happens with those common beauties that everyone appreciates ; the heart, the faith of the heart, the purity of the heart, was an indispensable condition of seeing it, and the different degrees of those virtues

constituted different measures of imperfect or perfect vision. What Jesus was, for example, in the sight of His most Holy Mother, He was not in the sight of any other ; what He was for His Apostles and intimate friends, He was not for strangers ; what He was for the just, the pure, the humble, the faithful, He was not for the unbelieving, the proud, the immodest, and for sinners. Now, when, by the aid, whether of consecrated symbols, or of the descriptions of ancient historians, or of the Gospel narratives, or of particular revelations, or even of works of Christian genius, you form in your mind a picture of the Saviour, you are actually, as to the true beauty and power of this Divine likeness, in a position analogous to that of the contemporaries of Jesus. The principal thing in this matter is your moral condition ; and the more, as St. Paul says, Jesus Christ is formed in you, the more you resemble Him, by your spirit, by your heart, and by your conduct, the more grace and facility you will have in your prayer and meditation, to imagine Him such as He really is.

Well ! by that inward baptismal light which shines with such brilliancy in the centre of your soul, regard this God-made man. Regard, doubtless, and first of all His interior beauty, that of His human intelligence, that of His Sacred Heart ; regard His inimitable character, and all that moral physiognomy so ineffably touching, which results from the holy study of the Gospel rightly understood. But further, contemplate His Body, so worthy of admiration, the most perfect, assuredly, of all bodies ; so chaste, so virginal, radiant with sanctity as much as with beauty ; contemplate successively His Feet, His Hands, His Opened Side, His Eyes, His Lips, His Brow, His Face. Follow Jesus in all His mysteries, and

in all His states ; an Infant at Bethlehem, cradled in the manger, or carried by Mary ; in His youth, and working with Joseph ; grown up to perfect manhood ; regard Him on Tabor, at the Last Supper, on Calvary, where, in proportion as His outward beauty is tarnished, His interior beauty becomes greater and more resplendent ; so much so, that at no time is He so spiritually beautiful as when He lost, so to speak, even the appearance of a man. To seek Him thus is one of the sweetest joys we can taste upon earth ; but when, by dint of faith, of humility, of desire, of confidence, of patience, of love, you shall at length have merited to catch a glimpse of Him, as far as we are able to see Him thus dimly on earth, you will then testify and will acknowledge that your heart is gained, is won, and holily enslaved. Yes, His Beauty ensures Him the empire over us. It is by this beauty that the most chaste Spouse in the Canticles was struck, who, while speaking of this Beauty of her Bridegroom, did not know how to leave off her discourse ; having considered everything in Him, she was almost beside herself, and could not avoid exclaiming aloud, and before everyone, that all that she had seen was marvellous (Cant. v. 10, 17). It was also this Divine Beauty which conquered the sweet Agnes, when with an accent of triumph she cried out, "What do you want with me? I have already One to Whom I am pledged, Who loves me, and Whom I love. My Betrothed, Who has my confidence, is He Whom the Angels serve, and Whose beauty the stars of Heaven admire. I love Christ, born of a virgin mother, and of a virgin God ; when I love Him, I remain chaste ; when I touch Him, I am pure ; and when I espouse Him, I am still more a virgin than before."*

* Breviar. Rom. Off. Stæ Agnetis.

Understand, then, that the serious and pious study of the beauty of God, whether in His works, or in Himself, or in His Word made Flesh, Jesus, is one of the great secrets of the spiritual life, because, being one of the most ardent furnaces of love, it is consequently a powerful and infallible principle of chastity.*

Yet, whatever may be the power of beauty to ravish and fix the heart of man, it can hardly succeed safely; but in so far as the love it incites is accepted and shared, a beauty without heart and without life, as is that of purely material things, can charm the imagination, and give a certain joy to the mind; but apart from the low cupidity which is the passion for possession, and which this kind of beauty may inspire, such a material beauty only fills the heart with a feeling of admiration, which, far from exhausting what it may naturally give, is only, so to speak, the movement on the surface. A lively and intelligent beauty, but one devoid of goodness, shocks us at once, as a disorder, and ends, in certain cases, by exciting such an irritation in the heart, as to make its repulsion extend even to hatred. We have said that it is the wish of nature that all beauty should be good: it is the law, and we do not feel it to be violated without pain. But if it satisfies our intelligence, that the being who is beautiful should be good, in order that our heart may be truly won, it is necessary that this goodness should regard ourselves, that it should be shown to *us*, at least in goodwill, and, in a word, that this being, at once beautiful and good, should love us.

* In the Book of Ecclesiasticus, Jesus, the son of Sirach, exalts the glorious men who were the fathers of the Jewish race, so dear to God, in spite of its faults; and among the praises He gives them is the following:—"Rich men in virtues, lovers of beautifulness, living at peace in their houses.—Eccles. xlv. 6.

Does the Divine Beauty manifest itself thus in our regard? For itself, incontestably, it expresses an infinite goodness: goodness is its foundation, its principle, its substance. But does this goodness regard us? is it shown to us? does it love us? The reply issued from your heart before I had finished proposing the question. Unless blind, by dint of being ungrateful, every creature replies: "Yes; but who has so many reasons for making this reply as man?" I do not say humanity only; but I say each member of humanity, every child born of woman, whatever may be in other respects its worth, its rank, its condition. On the part of this sovereign beauty, which we have endeavoured to describe, every human being is personally the object, not only of a true, but of an incomparable love, which has all the dimensions and all the perfections of the Being Who has conceived it.

We have no reason here to enlarge on the general characteristics of this strange love; it is manifestly gratuitous, generous, magnificent; it is full of mercy; it is compassionate, patient, disinterested, devoted, inexhaustible, and in a manner invincible. But it seems opportune to remark, especially in the order of ideas in which we are now engaged, that the special characteristic of God, which decides the question in our regard, is that this love for us has at once all that individuality, that ardour, and that tenderness, which constitute the love of a Bridgeroom. It is with this love that, from all eternity, by desire, by a formal will, and always really, so far as depends on it, this indescribable Beauty, which is God, loves each of us. All the other ways of loving man, for example, on His various titles of Creator, of Master, of Father, or even of Friend, have their termination and their recapitulation in this love; and thence it

comes that all the acts which His love for us urges Him to do, are of service only in preparing, ensuring, and consummating, the union, which is the supreme wish and the repose of this supreme love.

The meditation of this dogma, for it is one, brings the Christian soul in face of a veritable abyss. Except the soul of Jesus, and after Him, the soul of His most Holy Mother, no one has sounded its depth. But whoever has not come at least to the edge of this gulf, neither knows the gift of God nor God Himself; and whoever having advanced thus far, does not then stop and plunge his regard into its immeasurable depth, has not, as much as he ought, profited by this gift. The Infinite Beauty has for each man a Spousal love. Nothing can, like this, clearly reveal to us the absolute power of love; for, from the indubitable fact of which we are speaking, it seems to result that, even in God, love is dominant over all. In fact, God loving His creatures and giving Himself to them in quality of Bridegroom, what is this but the appropriation of the universal, a sort of privation of the infinite, and the immense reducing Himself to a point: which is the same thing as to say, the realisation of what appears impossible. Now this thing God has done. "My Beloved is Mine," says the Spouse triumphantly (Cant. ii. 16). God is my own property, as I am His property; He is mine, as much as if He were only mine. From this gift, so entire, on which is founded a state, an eternal state, come forth those holy flames, of which Jesus said: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled" (St. Luke xii. 49); and, at the same time, rivers of tenderness and of life burst from it, which make one think of what David prophesied of heaven: "Thou shalt make them drink of

the torrent of Thy pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9); and of that other word of Jesus to the Samaritan: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and Who is He that saith to thee, 'Give me to drink;' thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water" (St. John iv. 10); and lastly, of that other word still more sublime, if it be possible, and which, being the conclusion of the last discourse of Jesus, seems to be the last word of His Sacred Heart: "Father! may the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me be in them, and I in them" (St. John xvii. 26).

This passage shows you that this individual, ardent, and tender love of God for His poor human family, is manifested to us in Jesus and by Jesus, like so many others of His Divine perfections and operations. Without reminding you that Christ being personally the Bridegroom, it is He Himself Who says in the Book of the Canticles all that the Bridegroom says to His happy Bride), there is no one, however little he may be enlightened and given to the interior life, who does not see a ray of this priceless love penetrate the atmosphere in which he lives, when he thinks of Jesus weeping at the death of Lazarus, or letting His beloved disciple repose on His Heart at the Last Supper, or much more, saying to the distracted Magdalen in the garden of the resurrection: "Mary." These are what we have called the Divine familiarities; you will allow that they are adorable. A single one of them could more than suffice for the glory and happiness of an entire life, did that life equal in length that of the patriarchs; but, for the honour of His Heart and the consolation of our own, God has not only rendered these familiarities frequent, He has made them regular and even obligatory—obligatory for Him,

as far as He can do so, and altogether obligatory on us. In short, He has been pleased to make them a real institution, the fundamental and central institution of His religion and of His worship, and thus an institution, which is perpetual and universal. The Eucharist, that every Christian is bound to receive, is the formal witness, the official and regular exercise, the daily gift bestowed on countless members of this Spousal love, by which God unites Himself to each one, and gives Himself as the property of every individual who receives Him, in a measure, that no other union possible on earth can ever attain to.

Now, what is the natural effect of this love thus testified, and what is the answer of the heart that follows its law, which should be to follow its tendency—what answer, I say, does it make to God, Who has shown it so much love? Certainly, our soul is not immense: however, so numerous, so varied, so extended, and so capable, are the powers with which God has endowed it, that it can, by their means, conceive all things, and, to a certain point, God Himself; and not only can it conceive them by its intelligence, but it keeps in its memory the images it has perceived or the ideas it has formed; and it embraces by its will, which reposes in them with complacency, all these existences which remain in its knowledge, and which their remembrance renders present to it; and thence it is that it is also called a world. Well, when among so many spectacles that its senses, its reason, and its faith, discover to it, it sees this incomprehensible God which it has already admired and adored, concentrating, so to speak, all His attributes in love, and then concentrating upon itself poor, weak creatures, this prodigious love, in order to give Himself entirely to it

and to become to it, to become to it for ever, what the Bridegroom is to the Bride—when, I say, the soul sees all this, it not only melts with emotion, astonishment, and gratitude, as it is related of the Bride in the Canticles (Cant. v. 6), but, imitating Him Whom it sees, it also subjects the crowd of its interior, and even its exterior powers, all to love ; and the soul consecrates, it vows, it delivers up, it appropriates, this love to God alone. On the side of the earth and of time, we may call this a sacrifice ; but he who regards it from the height of Heaven, or in the light which comes from Heaven, can only see in it the accomplishment of justice, and before that, and much more than that, a grace received, and an unspeakable grace too. But, then, do you not understand that, by the very fact of this love, both of that which is given to the soul and that which it renders back, it is entirely chaste ; that chastity has become the intimate law and the necessity of its life, and consequently its normal and invariable state ? The soul is more than chaste, she is a virgin ; she is more than a virgin, she is holy ; and all this is the work of beauty, yielding itself to her by love.

Beauty is an outer court to love ; joy is its sanctuary. There is nothing that the soul covets so much as joy ; it is this she tries to discover in beauty, and what she wishes to find in love. All the rest she passes over, in order to repose only in joy. Joy is her end ; it is simple and regular, that she should tend to it and precipitate herself into it. All that is in her is set in this direction ; all goes straight to it, as to a centre. The soul wishes for joy so passionately, that rather than not find it at all, she demands it of those things that are forbidden—that is to say, of what is evil, and she snatches it from them

by force. This desire is a fire : nature itself, within us, sets it on fire, and, far from extinguishing or making it less ardent, the numberless sorrows of this world serve only the more to stir it up ; for, to the attraction of joy itself is joined, for the soul in affliction, the sovereign charm of consolation and of deliverance. But, like fire, which is so useful and so beneficent, when the light precedes and governs its action, it becomes, on the contrary, the most terrible of all forces, if it acts alone and blindly ; in the same way, this passion of joy, which urges us powerfully towards God, when it is enlightened and conducted by Christian principles, pushes us forward inevitably into the abyss of ruin and death ; when rendering itself independent of reason and faith, it only follows the impetuosity which is its special characteristic. If it were possible that, while uniting themselves in their relations to any being, beauty and love did not produce joy, in spite of their double and incontestable empire, beauty and love would lose their hold of that being ; he would be disgusted, and turn away from them ; he would flee from them with the feeling of having been betrayed—that is, with contempt and anger. But if, as it happens in the natural order of things, beauty and love give that joy which is their natural fruit, the soul is incapable of resistance ; it can no longer wish to leave them enchained as it is by that threefold cord, which the Scripture tells us is not easily broken. If, then, we come to know and see that as God is beauty and love, He is also joy, perfect joy, total joy, joy inexhaustible and eternal ; it becomes, as it were, impossible not only to separate ourselves from Him, but not to adhere to Him fully, constantly, and with all our strength.

Unless we are without understanding, we cannot deny

that in Himself God is absolute joy; neither can we deny that this joy can be communicated. Since we have the honour of being Christians, we believe and we profess that Almighty God wishes really to communicate it to us, and that He has promised to do so. But however firm may be our assurance of this, our heart suffers; and as this joy is only ours in the future, and that the certainty of our having food to-morrow, were it more than we want, does not allay the hunger we feel to-day; we are all, while waiting for it, inclined to complain.

Supposing it is true that our happiness is adjourned, so to speak, who would dare to find in this, a motive for scandal, or even for a murmur? If Adam, even in his innocence, had not been placed in the earthly paradise, and had it been necessary for him to purchase, at the expense of hard labour and the temporary privation of all sensible joy, the incomparable happiness of sharing, and being established, in the essential joy of God, would this have been for him an unjust, or even a hard condition? No, certainly, for, for him as for us, between these pains of a few days, and the eternal happiness they purchase, there is not even a shadow of any proportion whatever (Rom. viii. 18). If it had been thus for Adam when just and innocent, how much more for his sinful children! In truth, were the price of Heaven valued at a rate a thousand times higher, our destiny would still be a most happy one, and the mercy of God would indeed be magnificent. And how many joys, little, miserable, false, and corruptible, and corrupting, does not man find himself happy to purchase here below, by hopes almost as long delayed, and by sacrifices in other ways, as painful as ours are, in regard to celestial happiness!

But is it true that this earth is only a place of desolation and of mourning? Is it true that the present life is one only of sorrows without any admixture of joy, without truce, and without compensation? Is it true that Almighty God forbids or envies us all contentment, all gratification, all pleasure; and that Christians in particular see the days of their pilgrimage flow on without ever drinking one drop of that Divine joy, of which their faith teaches, that they carry within them substantially, a very ocean?

God said to Abraham, "Look up to heaven, and number the stars" (Gen. xv. 5); try, then, if you can, to number the joys that God gives you. "He opens His Hand," says the Psalmist, "and fills with blessing every living creature" (Ps. cxliv. 16). It is at the first hour of the world's existence, that He thus opens His Hand, and ever since, even after sin entered it, He has not closed it for one second. There are days of rain; but what days there are of sunshine! There are mists and fogs, but how much light and how many days when the sky is serene and fair! There are severe winters, but how many spring-times when flowers abound, and what rich and fruitful autumns! There are some frightful noises; but how much singing of birds, and, throughout the whole of nature, how many harmonies! And above this first world, through which God Himself so often smiles upon us, how many joys, and what joys! Who shall say what joys there are of science, of art, of industry! Who shall recount the joys of the family circle; those of friendship, those of love! Yet all this is only in the natural order, the order of blessings common to all humanity, without distinction of race, of country, of social, and even of moral condition; for the Gospel

says—and we are witnesses of its truth—that our Heavenly Father “maketh His sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust” (St. Matt. v. 45). “Yes,” exclaims St. Augustine, “all these joys are the consolations of the miserable, and even of the reprobate; they are not the salary of the elect.” “But then,” he continues, “if such, and so numerous, and so excellent, are these consolations, what will be the reward of the elect?”*

Yet without ascending so high, look at the joys which are divinely spread abroad in the order of grace, that order which Baptism opens out to us, and in which we shall continue to our last hour. Of right, sin is not in these joys; if, in a certain sense, we may say that sin does enter among them, since sin, as such, does not exclude the baptised Catholic from the Church, it is only that it may be pardoned and destroyed; it is with this hope and for this end, that it is suffered there; and who does not understand that the disappearance of sin is the appearance of joy, and the commencement of its reign? And, in truth, joy does not only commence to reign by means of grace (although, in reference to the happiness promised us, we enjoy only its preludes here below); this reign goes on increasing in strength, and always progressing; so much so, that in faithful souls it becomes a reign which is tranquil and uncontested. Christianity, in its entirety, is nothing but a continued joy. Is it not as an era of joy that the Prophets of the old Covenant everywhere present it to the desire and to the hope of all mankind? And when it springs into being at the

* Et hæc omnia miserorum sunt damnatorumque solatia, non præmia beatorum. Quæ igitur illa sunt, si tot ac talia et tanta sunt ista?—De Civit. Dei., lib. xxii., cap. 24.

birth of Jesus, did not Heaven itself, infallibly truthful, say to the shepherds by the voice of an Angel, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people ;" yours first, then the joy of all who live, or shall live upon the earth? (St. Luke ii. 10). Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is the joy itself of God come down upon the earth, and Jesus comes only to give Himself. He is the Source of that river which, rapid as a torrent, saith David, "maketh glad the city of God" (Ps. xlv. 5), that is to say, the Holy Church, the Spirit which consecrated and filled this Church on that day of Pentecost, when, the work of ripening being completed, It gave forth its first fruits. The Holy Spirit, I say, is an unction of joy and gladness, and He Himself declares it (Ps. xlv. 8). Thus the Church, full of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of joy, labours only to make men happy. In the exact measure in which she propagates sanctity, she propagates happiness. If we understand it rightly, the whole life of the Church is but one continual festival; every day is called by her a feria—that is to say, a holiday, a day of leisure, a time of rejoicing; and thence it comes that she is always singing. What other society does so, what other society ever imagined, or undertook to do it; and what other society could ever have done it? Now, for nearly 1,900 years the Church has been thus singing, and she will continue thus to sing to the end of the world. "My justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage" (Ps. cxviii. 54). And to the Church, singing is quite a different thing from a pastime, a pleasure that she takes or gives at the canonical hours; it is a need, it is a duty, a duty always prescribed and always accomplished; it is the regular accent of her voice, and one of the forms of her worship. The Church's chant

has been heard in the catacombs, on the scaffold, and at the grave ; the Church will never chant so much, nor with a heart so joyous, as when, on the accumulated ruins strewn everywhere by Antichrist, it shall lift up its eyes towards the east, to salute the coming at length of the final and total redemption (St. Luke xxi. 28). What a sign that will be ! and what a revelation ! but at the same time what a privilege ! Joy, then, is not only the object of the Church, and the term it proposes to all : it enters into its very spirit, and it is its principal work.

From a word several times repeated by St. Paul (Philipp. iii. 1, 4 ; 1 Thes. v. 16), we may conclude that joy is one of the Church's laws ; and for him who can understand it, this law is a principal one. In mortals we can even prove that everything reduces itself to it, and that joy is at once the highest point, and the sum of our duties. But the Church is the author of this joy, and she gives it to all who wish to have it. Does not joy naturally proceed from the lights with which she fills the world by her doctrine, by the prospects she opens out, by the hopes that she gives and nourishes, by the pardons she accords, the treasures of all sorts she dispenses, by the sacraments she administers, by the sacrifice she offers, by the prayers she sends up to God, by the numberless works of mercy she practises towards mankind, by the liberty she renders them, and by the peace she ensures them ? " O how great," exclaims the Royal Prophet, " is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them who fear, and love, and serve Thee !" (Ps. xxx. 20). The Scripture is quite full of the recital of those joys which are the inheritance of the servants and the children of God. They are unspeakable, and, at the same time, they are innumerable ; joys

of the mind, joys of the heart, joys of the conscience, joys of the whole soul, joys even of the senses, as it happens in that outward worship to which nature and art emulously contribute; joys so much the more exquisite, as, their aim being more elevated, they are more sober in themselves and more chaste in their object. What shall we say of the joys of the Christian? There are some of them which are deeply seated in the heart; there some which are public, some which are social, and some that are universal. And all this is common to each one among us, and none can deprive us of them but ourselves. All these joys are of their own nature unchangeable, and the gift of God in bestowing them upon us suffers no change of mind (Rom. xi. 29). The world can do nothing more than envy them, when it is so blind as not to believe them; hell itself has no power to snatch them from us; there is nothing but sin which first of all troubles these joys, and then, when it is consummated, takes them away altogether. But no one sins, except he who wishes to sin, and when the fault is sorrowed for, and confessed, it is forgiven; and then there follows only an increase of love and of joy in the soul which is reconciled to her God, and an immense exultation in all the Church in Heaven (St. Luke xv. 7).

Such, then, is the triumphant power of this joy which God gives to His own, and which becomes their normal state on earth, that it is not only proof against trouble, though attacked by it on every side; it goes so far as to transform it, laying hold of it, and seizing it, as the fire seizes wood; then, spreading over it, attracting it to itself, making it its own, and ending, so to speak, by identifying itself, and becoming one with it. We have already spoken of this elsewhere: it becomes, then, a happiness

to weep, and there is joy in this suffering. Where are there, except among ourselves, outside the family of God, outside of God, joys like these, so firm, so powerful, and especially so victorious? Our adorable Saviour has said : "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (St. Matt. vii. 16). Such a sight is never beheld in nature, and unless God works a miracle to produce it, the thing is impossible; in grace, it is a fact of daily occurrence. Yes, since these thistles and these thorns, which the sin of Adam made to germinate in our soil, have crowned the Blessed Head of Jesus, and pierced His Virginal Flesh, these thorns produce grapes, and figs are gathered from these thistles. And precisely because they are begotten thus, these fruits have a taste more delicious than if they had been produced from their natural stalk. Is not that sacrament, that joy among all the Christian joys, that infinite treasure, that more than Angelic Bread, which "has in it all that is delicious, because it has the sweetness of every taste" (Wisd. xvi. 20)—in a word, is not that Holy Eucharist, which comes forth from the sacrifice and the ensanguined Cross of Jesus, something more, and far more than the bringing forth of the grape and of the fig from the thorny bush? And if all the substance of our joy consists in grace, does not all grace flow down to us from the Passion of Christ? Yes, henceforth, to be afflicted with Jesus, is the sweetest consolation there is in the world; to suffer for His Name, is to open the soul to the inundations of joy. "They went away rejoicing," the Scripture recounts of the Apostles, who were unjustly cited by the council of their country (Acts v. 41). And why did they rejoice? Because "they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus." And Saint Paul,

who, at that time, was not there, but for whom it was reserved to suffer for the Name of Jesus, more than the rest of the Apostles (Acts ix. 16), Saint Paul says, writing to the Corinthians: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (2 Cor. vii. 4).

It is thus, then, even while we are in this world, that we enter, as the Gospel says, into the joy of our Lord (St Matt. xxv. 21). For if God gives us joys, if especially He is our joy, as He is so by grace, and in grace, it is He Who is the essential joy, as He is essentially Love and Beauty. Grace is, according to St. Peter, a communication of the Divine Nature (2 Peter i. 4); since for God to exist or to be happy, is but one and the same thing, we cannot participate in His nature without participating in His joy; and the more perfectly we communicate in the one, the more perfectly we communicate in the other. What a light is this, to enlighten our life and our path! What a principle, what a rule, what a safeguard, what a stimulus! Our Christian joys are the first rays of that joy which is God Himself, the sign of His presence, the effect of His love for us, the fruit of His union with us! God showed this vision to Saint Augustine, in order to complete His conquest of him—that is to say, to complete his conversion. "I had a vision of chastity," said this admirable Saint, in recounting his last struggles; "she was all radiant with a pure and serene joy. As a friend or a sister would have done, she invited me to come; and all ready to embrace me, she extended her hands to me, full of encouraging examples. Children, young people, crowds of all ages, venerable widows, women grown old in virginity—all these souls were chaste, and this chastity was not sterile in any one of them; it was in them all, like a fruitful

mother, begetting in them a multitude of true joys, as so many fruits she owed to Thy love, O God, Who art her Spouse.”*

This experience of Divine joys can go very far on the earth—so far, that we have heard Saints exclaim sometimes to God : “ It is too much, Lord, it is too much ; stay Thy Hand, spare me ; if not, I must die.” But even carried to this height, which is an excessive joy, the joy of all in this life is never but the shadow of that which is Divinely promised to all those who have had the wisdom and the strength to be thus holily happy here below, and to keep themselves faithful to those Christian joys, disdaining all others. Were you ravished in ecstasy, as was Saint Teresa, or intoxicated with joy, as Saint Francis, it is still true, “ that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ; neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him ” (1 Cor. ii. 9).

* *Aperiebatur enim ab eâ parte quâ intenderam faciem et quò transire trepidabam, casta dignitas continentiae, serena et non dissolutè hilaris, honestè blandiens ut venirem, neque dubitarem ; et extendens ad me suscipiendum et amplectandum pias manus, plenas gregibus bonorum exemplorum. Ibi tot pueri et puellæ ; ibi juven-tus multa et omnis ætas, et graves viduæ, et virgines anus, et in omnibus ipsa continentia, nequaquàm sterilis, sed fœcunda mater filiorum gaudiorum de marito te, Domine.—Conf., lib. viii. c. 11.*

ON OBEDIENCE.

It is as attractive to investigate, as it is difficult to define, what passed in the Soul of Jesus Christ at the moment when, drawn from nothing by the Divine power of the Almighty, It had, with the first feeling of Its existence, that of Its personal union with the Word of God. Although born in this pilgrim's life, and to lead this life for a time, this Soul from the first enjoyed, in Its superior part at least, the life of the Blessed in Heaven, and that beatific vision which is its essence. To exist, to be hypostatically united to the Word, and to see God face to face in a degree of perfection to which none other of the Blessed shall ever attain, was, for the Holy Humanity, one and the same thing ; and for all this to happen, an instant sufficed. We can understand that the history of this instant cannot be wholly expressed in words. The Soul of Jesus must have been immediately and wholly enraptured. Seeing God at once in His nature and in His gift—that is to say, in Himself and in It—the Soul immediately darted forward towards Him by a movement so spontaneous, so impetuous, and so full—it embraced Him with so much energy, and united itself to Him with such ardour—that this second voluntary union imitated as closely as possible the union hypostatic that had preceded and instigated it ; so much so, that this

unparalleled grace could not receive from any created being whatever, a more perfect correspondence.

Apart from Himself, God had never been so much loved ; no, not even by Mary at the moment when, through love, she opened her heart and gave herself up to this adorable mystery. This first act of love, on the part of Jesus, for His Father, answered to the fulness and extent of the Divine amiability. But if all the essential characteristics of love meet in this act of surpassing excellence, there is one of them, nevertheless, which most probably excelled the rest, especially in that first moment of which we are speaking, and consequently in that first look, of which it appears to be the direct and unailing effect : this characteristic is that of adoration. The Soul of Jesus saw all in God ; but it was quite enough to be a creature, to be most struck with what It saw of His absolute superiority and His supreme sovereignty. For every created being, in fact, to see God, is, first of all, to see a Master and a Lord. The divine light which inundated the Humanity of Christ only made Him discover more clearly the unspeakable disproportion which exists between His two natures ; the astonishing condescension of the higher of the two, revealed still more its sublimity ; and to the rights of the Divinity, already infinite, it added those which arose from a benefit which was without a parallel. It appears, then, that in this matter respect should take the precedence of tenderness ; and if, in its final term, the first movement in the Soul of Christ was that of a consummate union with God, in its principles, we cannot doubt, it was an act of complete annihilation of Itself, which precisely constitutes adoration.

It follows from this, that the blessed Soul of Jesus took immediately an attitude in regard to God, which we may

call normal, because we find it invariably in all His actions ; because, very often inspiring them, it always accompanied them ; because it determined their direction and gave to them their true form ; and finally, because it impressed its own general and eminent character on the entire life of the Saviour, a Being Whom its own light, joined to perfect rectitude, annihilated so profoundly before God, could only regard itself and conduct itself as His most humble subject and most docile servant. This subjection and this service was for our Lord the practical truth ; it was order, law, and justice : this alone placed Him in harmony with God, and sealed their mutual peace. It was the first honour He had to render to the Divinity, the necessary foundation of all His relations with it, as it was also the soul of all the duties to which these relations gave rise.

Thus, by the two-fold fact of His human nature and of His will, which, once decided, decided for Him all the rest, Jesus was the first subject of God ; the first, and the most devoted of all His servants. It was under this noble name that the Prophets had many times announced Him, and God Himself had been pleased to point out thus His Messiah (Isaias xli. 9, xlix. 5 ; Zachar iii. 8) ; so that, morally speaking, all, as far as Jesus was concerned, reduced itself to obedience ; and this first attitude of which we have just spoken was that of one who was obedient. The beatific light was in Him as a sap ; adoration was its living root ; obedience was the trunk, which, throwing out innumerable branches, was to bear numberless fruits. In short, as the Scripture tells us that the " Word was made Flesh " (St. John i. 14), it tells us also that Jesus " became obedient " (Philipp. ii. 8). To be " made Flesh " was His constitution, to

become obedient was His condition—the one springing from the other, and the latter resting upon the former, whence it comes that His obedience is essential to Him, and cannot change.

Besides, this obedience of Jesus does not only regard the sovereignty of God considered in itself, but also in as far as God claims its exercise from Him, Jesus knew, Jesus saw beforehand, to what a point the practice of this obedience would go, and that God would drive Him to real extremities. He knew, He saw, besides, that He was Himself a fit field of operation for the exercise of this Divine sovereignty, an immense domain open for the fulfilment of His wills, and His intentions. This was indeed the first reason of His coming into our world, and of His earthly existence. He only came into the world to honour the Divine rights of His Father, that is to say, that these rights might receive the worship, the love, and the submission, which they claimed. It was necessary that, once at least, God should carry out in a creature all His wills, not only without obstacle and without delay, but without reserve, and, so to speak, without limits. It was necessary, that from the bosom of creation, a free voice should go forth, which, by conviction and by love, should be an echo to that adorable assent, which God in His inner life, gives to that absolute perfection which is the essence of His superiority, and of His almighty dominion over all things.

Supposing that Jesus had come into a world which was exempt from sin, to be in it simply a Mediator of religion, and a Divine Chief of all the universe, He would have found the same order; He would have seen Himself in presence of the same august rights, and would have claimed from man the same docility and the same

reverence. He alone, then as now, could by this, have fully satisfied for, and thus have paid our entire debt towards God. It is related that certain potentates did not esteem themselves at the height of their power, or at least did not judge this power sufficiently honoured, so long as they were not served by kings. This was, no doubt, a detestable pride. But such is the excellence of God, that if it was His pleasure to be thus served (and this necessarily pleases Him when He has beings to govern), He could not be altogether worthily served, but by a creature personally deified, such as Jesus, true God and true man.

The mere view of the rights of God then, would have made of Jesus, under all circumstances, the most obedient of beings ; but do we not see how this need of obedience on His part was immensely increased, when He saw these rights violated by sinful humanity ? for sin is the violation of the rights of God, being always, and first of all, a disobedience : as it is written, “ As by the disobedience of one, many, the whole human race, were made sinners ” (Rom. v. 19). Certainly, we always love our father and our mother, and on every occasion we show them our love ; but let them suffer any insult or injury, how much more do we then manifest to them our affection, and what need we feel to be more lavish in the expressions of our love, in order to make them forget the outrage they have received ? Such, in regard to His Father, was the situation of Jesus. Also as His natural ardour towards God was augmented by the fervent desire He had to make Him compensation for the ingratitude, the indifference, and even the hatred of this multitude that had gone astray, and of which He was constituted the Head ; so His obedience was rendered so much the more profound,

as it was eager to repair and to cover all our want of submission. It was not enough then, that His obedience should go so far as service ; it was necessary that it should extend even to sacrifice. It did not make Him a subject only ; it made Him a Victim : and thence St. Paul having first said, that " Christ for us became obedient," adds immediately, " to death, even the death of the Cross" (Philipp ii. 8).

Now, this two-fold obedience was simultaneously rendered to God by Jesus Christ in that first movement of His Soul which commenced here on earth the series of His actions. His entire life, that life which a book as large as the world would not be sufficient to contain the recital of it all (St. John xxi. 25), was only the unfolding and successive development of that first and entire submission. In principle and in the eye of God, all was consummated by that act ; and we can understand, how, at the moment when this obedient Man-God appeared in the world, all Heaven, breaking forth into songs of joy, chanted that canticle : " Glory be to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will " (St. Luke ii. 14).

This obedience is, then, the principal characteristic of the life of Jesus ; but it is also the virtue by which He made reparation for our disobedience, and gave life to our obedience ; for in paying our debts, He repaired also the ruin of our fall ; and what the rebellion of the old Adam had effected for our death, saith St. Paul, the submission of the New Adam, effected for our life (Rom. v. 17—19). It is, consequently, the great example that Jesus now proposes to us, the great secret He now reveals to us, the royal road He now opens, and the great duty He now prescribes to us : so much so, that all

religion, we may say, is summed up in obedience. Yes, certainly, obedience is the sum of all, since love itself, which in religion is so supreme a law, that it appears as if it were the only one, love, is not strictly regarded as true and genuine, nor has it any value for heaven, unless it has the seal of obedience impressed upon it, and if it lacks this sap. You see, therefore, why Jesus ordains obedience on all, and inculcates everywhere its rigorous obligation. At the moment of taking leave of His Apostles, He returns to the subject again, as if nothing were more important for the well-being of those He was quitting, and as if consequently He had nothing more at heart : "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you ; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, as I also have kept My Father's commandments, and do abide in His love" (St. John xv. 9, 10). Thus, the friendship of Jesus is at stake, and therefore grace, and therefore salvation. The law is, then, universal, and does not admit of any dispensation. To obey, or be a Christian, to obey, or to have life before God, is one and the same thing. Heaven will cease to exist, before it opens its gates to one who is disobedient.

But here, as elsewhere, there is a necessary and elementary virtue, which answers to the precept and establishes the ordinary justice of Christians ; and there is a higher degree of virtue, which, passing beyond strict duty, helps on to sanctity, those who embrace and practise it, and ends by making saints of those who practise it with perfection. It was not possible that the members should not be invited to practise in an eminent degree, that obedience, in which their Head so much excelled. The example of Jesus did more than was

sufficient for this. So many sacred and touching bonds, with which they saw He had freely bound Himself both in life and in death, would attract chosen souls, and allure some of them irresistibly. Being at first an object of reverential worship, those bonds could not fail of becoming hereafter the object of zealous imitation ; and it was a kind of necessity, that the Crib, the Cross, the Eucharist, should light up in certain hearts the passionate desire of obedience. However, to the very pressing example our Lord had set them, He also deigned to add His word ; and as He had counselled men to renounce for His love all temporal riches, and all the joys of the flesh, He still further counselled them to sacrifice to Him their independence, and that power which nature gives us all to direct our ways ourselves, according to our reasonable wills, and our legitimate inclinations.

The Church, to which are confided the secrets of our Lord, knows that He concealed this counsel, in the last words He addressed to that young Jew, for whom the Gospel relates that He had a particular affection. This young man drew back when he heard of the sacrifice he was to make, and therefore he did not deserve to correspond with the Divine love. “Go, sell whatever thou hast,” said the Divine Master, “and give to the poor.” He thus called him to holy poverty—“and come, follow Me” (St. Mark x. 21) ; and by these words He opened to him the way of holy obedience. To follow Jesus, in fact, is not only, as Saint Jerome writes, to imitate Him and to walk in His footsteps,* but also, as Suarez teaches after Saint Thomas, to attach ourselves entirely to Him as His disciples, to keep ourselves in His company, and

* *Sequitur Dominum qui imitator ejus est et per vestigia illius graditur.*—S. Heron. in cap. xix. Matth.

to make over to Him for ever the government of our life and of our soul, in order to be instructed, and moulded, and sanctified by Him.*

It is on this word, full of grace and illustrated by the whole life of the Saviour, that the doctrine has been established of that eminent obedience, which, practised in substance by the Apostles of Jesus, has not ceased for a single day to be honoured by the Holy Church, and has remained the immortal basis of that magnificent and imperishable state, which we call the state of Religion, or the Religious state. We say its basis, because, according to the unanimous teaching of Catholic doctors, one is not a Religious, for having made a vow of poverty, or even of chastity; but one becomes so, by the sole fact of having made a vow of obedience.†

We have now to treat of this noble virtue. Since it is a command to all, we shall speak of it for all; but following our custom, we shall address ourselves more particularly to those who have had the grace to make the vow, and who ought, in consequence, to practise it to a greater extent and with a far higher degree of perfection. It seems to us, that with the help of God, we shall have sufficiently explained this fundamental doctrine, if, after

* Dico Christum verbo illo: "Sequere me," non invitasse adolescentem illum tantum ad suam imitationem in omni genere, sed etiam ad sequendum realiter et corporaliter, ut sic dicam, se et actiones suas illi committendo. . . . atque, ut semel dicam, obedientiam illi præstando, non illam tantum quæ ad salutem necessaria est, sed aliam specialiore et ad perfectionis viam assequendam necessariam.—Suarez, *De Statu Relig.*, lib. x., cap. i. ix. Cfr. S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Q. clxxxvi.

† Si aliquis absque voto obedientiæ voluntariam paupertatem et continentiam etiam voto servet, non propter hoc pertinet ad statum religionis.—S. Thom. *ibid.*, art. 8, 6.

stating the principles which establish, illustrate, and regulate holy obedience, we point out the graces it contains and the Divine advantages it ensures, explaining, in the last place, the duties it imposes—duties which are numerous, varied, difficult perhaps, but too clear to faith, not to be very sweet to love.

I.

There are two forms, two manifestations, two actions of sovereignty: the first is power, the second is law; in each of these ways sovereignty claims obedience. We owe obedience to a power which is legitimate; we owe it to a law which is legitimately established by this power.

God is the absolute Being. “I am Who I am,” saith God (Exod. iii. 14). He is all being,—we may say that He is all being, for all that exists without being Himself holds its being from Him, and can only hold it from Him, and can only preserve it by means of Him. He could have been the only being for ever, since His existence alone is necessary and fully sufficient for Himself; but even after He had created the universe He remains still alone, in a sense; for creatures are so small an item, whatever resemblance He may give them to Himself, and however near to Him He may make them, that they are before Him, as if they had no existence—the Spirit of Truth says this distinctly in the Scriptures (Ps. xxxviii. 6). It follows that God being simply what He is, though the world did not exist, He is, in every way, superior to it, after He has given it existence. His rule over it, is infinite, He embraces it on all sides, He penetrates it to its very foundations, He has hold of it in all its parts, keeping them distinct, united, and each in its place—in a word, under every title and in every

way, He is the world's Almighty Master, and such is His sovereignty considered in itself.*

Now, as we have said elsewhere, this God in Whom are all possible existences, in Him also is all possible goodness, and from the very fact that this goodness resides in Him, this God is goodness itself. Goodness is His essence, His character, His life, His natural and eternal action ; all things in Him are but one and the same thing, namely, to use the language of the Fourth Council of Lateran, "that thing which is above all naming and all conception, which is Himself."† And, by an inscrutable mystery, this goodness, so perfectly and so necessarily happy, flows over, however, out of God, as if it sought there some other object besides Himself ; and as out of Him it can only find nothingness, it takes hold of this nothingness, and draws from it a multitude of beings. This is not all ; having given these beings a separate existence—that is to say, their own proper nature, which is His first benefit, Almighty God attracts them without delay to Himself, each according to the destiny which He assigns to it, and the capacity with which He endows it ; and the chosen ones among these beings, which form more than a multitude, the chosen ones which are no less than a

* *Omnitenens Deus dicitur quod ipse sit omnium sedes, omnia continens atque complectens et cuncta stabiliens, fundans atque constringens, et universum insolubile in seipso præstans et ex se, tanquàm ex omnitenente radice, cuncta producens, atque ad se tanquàm ad fundum omnitenens universa convertens et continens, ut omnium sedes omnicapax ; omnia contenta unâ præcellenti connexionione communiens, neque sinens ea sibi excedere, ne tanquàm, perfectâ domo motâ dispereant.*—S. Dionys. Areop. *De Div. Nomin.* cap. 10, 1.

† *Quædam summa res est Pater, Filius et Spiritus Sanctus.*—*Concil. Lateran. iv., ann. 1215, cap. 2. Definitio contra Abb. Joachim.*

countless number of Angels and men, He incessantly attracts towards Himself, till they not only come into His Divine Presence, but are transformed and consummated in Him.

Now, this goodness which thus attracts His creatures to the Divine resemblance, and, as far as they are capable of it, to unity of life with God ; the infallible wisdom which, at a single glance, discovers all the means which are conducive to that end ; the power which holds in its hand all these means discovered by wisdom, and, in concert with it, employs them to bring to pass the design of love ; these three together constitute the sovereignty of God, in its act and in its exercise ; the sovereignty of God, such as it presents itself to us, in order to exercise its influence over us, to regulate our relations with it, and to determine morally our interior dispositions, our free resolutions, and all the series of our works.

Such, in its supreme reality, in its eternal model, such, in its principle and in its source, is this influence so august, holy, serene, and beneficent, which we call sovereignty, authority, power.

But this magnificent and generous design of love, which God wills and is able to accomplish, is not to continue concealed from the beings whom it may concern. From the infinite heights of God's intelligence, where it is always resplendent, from the depths of the Heart of God, where it is eternally conceived, it makes its escape on a given day ; it comes as a ray of light to touch the creature, and, by inundating his spirit with its brightness, it fills his heart with strength, as well as with grace, with hope, and with joy. In so far as it fixes our thoughts, and is a foundation to our belief, this

authentic declaration of the design of God in our regard is called dogma or doctrine; in as much as it imposes an order on our life, commands our wills, and regulates our conduct, it takes the name of law. Besides, all dogma is already a law, for it obliges all those whom it enlightens; and all law is also a dogma, for it enlightens all those whom it binds. However, as God only binds man in order to sanctify, and save him, He enlightens him only to bind him; as also the work of salvation commencing by faith, which is the homage of the spirit, is only achieved by obedience, which is the homage of the will, this mutual relation between God and our humanity, which we call religion, receives more justly, and more commonly, the general name of law, than that of dogma or of doctrine. It is thus that to designate the religious institution which preceded our own, we call it the old Law, or the Law of fear, and to signify that which dates from Jesus Christ, we call it the new Law, or the Law of grace and of love. The law is, then, the form, the word, the sacrament of sovereignty. On this title it contains what it expresses, and communicates what it contains; that is to say, all that enters, as an essential element, into the act of sovereignty, that goodness which has chosen us, that wisdom that finds us, that power that lays hold of us, all this is in the law, and comes to us by it. All this is offered to us, when the law is proposed to us; all this passes into us, when we have accomplished it. "He that seeketh the law," saith the Scriptures, "shall be filled with it" (Eccles. xxxii. 19); and with what will it fill him, if not with this threefold Divine virtue, which is truly its substance?

It is clear that by all these roots the law is immersed in love; it is from love it takes all its sap, whence it

follows that all the fruits it bears are full of its moisture. It is, as it were, the first step and invitation of love ; it is its pledge ; it lays down the foundation of the conditions of the union which it covets, and, if it is accepted, it becomes its formal contract. See, then, if St. Paul had not just reason to say that it is good (Rom. vii. 12). The work and the organ of goodness, it makes good all those who keep it.

It is also light : reason declares it, the Holy Spirit confirms it ; “ My Son,” we read in the Book of Proverbs, “ keep the commandments of thy Father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” And why ? Because “ the commandment is a lamp and the law is a light ” (Prov. vi. 20, 23). And why should it not be a light in itself, since it is only the irradiation and the expression of the Divine thought (Ps. xviii. 9), “ the form of knowledge,” as St. Paul calls it, “ and of the truth,” “ the dictate,” according to St. Thomas, “ and the oracle of the absolute reason.”* And how, being light itself, should it not also be light for us, since it has no other aim than to cause the day to dawn in our souls, that it may shine also in our life, and to throw light upon the way in which we ought to walk, as children of light ” (1 Thess. v. 5). On the first day of the world, God said, “ Let light be,” and light was (Gen. i. 3). It was doubtless a light subtle and scattered, which by reason of its subtlety, had no proportion to our atmosphere on earth, and therefore could not answer to our wants. This is the reason why, on the fourth day, God formed in the firmament that marvellous star which we call the sun, and in which that general and

* Dictamen rationis in principio.—P. 2da. Quæst. xci. 1, o. Ratio divinæ sapientiæ moventis omnia ad debitum finem obtinet rationem legis.—*Id. ibid.* xciii. 1, o.

higher light which existed before, is for our use fixed and concentrated : whence it comes that God charges this star to give light to our globe, and to regulate by its light the succession of our days (Gen. i. 16). It is the exact image of the law, the sun of the moral world. The eternal and infinite reason of God, which is the essential rule of all things, is represented, for our sakes, in the law ; it takes in it an outward form, and accommodates itself to our usages.

Resulting from Power, as well as from Wisdom and Goodness, the law, which is already a light and a guarantee, cannot fail to be a force. Without speaking of the grace which regularly accompanies all the works of God (sensible grace and attraction in the exterior order, and spiritual grace and attraction in the spiritual order); without calling to mind, that God, acting with all His attributes when He works, and treating with man only that He may gain the whole man, does not intimate to him any command, without giving him help to understand it, to relish it, and to submit to it ; without, I say, referring to any of these considerations, the law in itself, and by the mere fact that it is divine, possesses a power and a virtue which attracts us. Not only does it persuade the mind, but it charms the heart, and subdues the will : not indeed, it is true, that will which is low, instinctive, animal, which Scripture calls carnal, and which is much more an appetite, than it is a will, but the superior will which grace renders *spiritual*, after nature has made it *reasonable*. Saint Paul, the eloquent witness and sincere avower of the radical opposition between the flesh and the law, yet says, " I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man " (Rom. vii. 22). He does not only approve of it ; he is not content to avow

that it is right, and that it is holy ; he is attached to it, he is pleased with it, and he finds in it unspeakable joys. Still this is not enough. To the force of this first attraction, which having become decisive for us, is barely sufficient for the greater number, God, in His indulgent goodness and in His wise mercy, has joined a power, which is secondary, extrinsic, indirect, but which is singularly efficacious, and which is exactly to the law, what a vigorous arm is to the weapon which it brandishes in case of attack ; this secondary power is the penalty, that is to say, the threatened menace of the chastisement which awaits the indocile. This penalty is the resource of love against perverse or idle wills. It has the effect of making fear itself and self-interest conspire together to promote the design of this blessed love. It causes the pressure of the law on man in all directions, and ends as far as possible, in mastering him, leaving him only his indispensable and inviolable liberty, the good use of which in other respects it renders easy. The words of the Divine Psalmist are, then, as true as they are admirable : “The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls : the testimony of the Lord is faithful,” since it declares His thoughts, and makes known His wills, it gives wisdom to “little ones,” that is to say, to the humble, the simple, and the obedient (Ps. xviii. 8).

All that we have now said is applicable to the power of the law in general, but first, and most of all, to the sovereign power of God, and of the Divine law ; whether of the natural law, so called, because it is divinely stamped upon us by the sole fact of our reasonable nature, or of positive law, which is the matter of Divine revelation, and which we call supernatural, because, being founded on God’s most free and entirely gratuitous

design of deifying our race, it imposes on us this glorious will, and gives us the means of procuring its accomplishment.

But these Divine, and therefore sublime, realities, power and law, God, without lowering them, gives them a certain bent; without dividing, He extends them; without lessening, He communicates them. It is written that He is a "jealous God" (Exod. xxxiv. 14). This is to be understood of the inviolability and inflexibility of His rights, of the all-mightiness and urgency of His wills, the exigencies, especially, of His merciful love; this does not imply in Him anything exclusive, and the shadow even of egotism has no possible place in this Being Who is all charity.* Therefore it is not enough for Him to deify His creatures; He deigns to employ them as co-operators with Him in the work of their deification; so that being at first its subjects, they become at length its instruments and authors. "Among so many gifts that God has bestowed upon us," says the great Areopagite, "there is none more Divine" (1 John iv. 16).

In the physical order, God, Who is the first and universal Cause, establishes between Himself and the ultimate effects He intends to produce, an innumerable succession of secondary and particular causes. These second causes He animates with a productive power; so that having received, they also give, and to the honour of their own existence they add the glory and the happi-

* Etenim cujuslibet eorum qui sacrum ordinem sortiti sunt, in hoc sita perfectio est, ut ad divinam, pro captu quisque suo, promoveatur imitationem; quodque divinius est omnium, ipsius etiam Dei, ut Eloquia loquuntur, cooperator existat.—De Cœlest Hierarch., cap. iii., 2.

ness of their fecundity. So it is in the moral order as between Himself, the Supreme Power, and those inferior beings on whom He impresses particular directions, in order that they may follow their appointed way, and thus arrive at their destined end ; so He establishes different orders of powers which, invested by Him with a portion of His rights, borrow His energy, associate themselves with His action, and contribute on their part to the success of His enterprises. Between God and the flower of the field there is the stalk which produces this flower, and the root which bears this stalk, and the seed-germ from which this root proceeds, and the soil into which this seed-germ has been cast. Between God and the infant, which is just born, there are the father and the mother, who gave it birth. Between God and our body, there is the soul which rules, animates, and governs it ; and so between God the sovereign Ruler and ourselves, the lowest in the scale of that intelligent creation, which is entirely subject to Him, there are constituted authorities, powers of different ranks and various officials, some invisible and purely spiritual, like the Angels ; others visible and human, as pontiffs, kings, princes, magistrates, and, finally, superiors of every rank and name. In a word, God, between Himself and us, establishes a hierarchy—that is to say, as St. Dionysius admirably explains it, “a sacred and Divine system, in which order, science, and energy, which are in God in an eminent degree, assume by His Will a created and stable existence, in order to propagate, with regularity and sweetness, throughout the universe, that luminous, sanctifying, and beatifying movement, which, under the action of love, comes forth eternally from the bosom of the Father, to return thither, and to

place there for ever creatures purified, enlightened, and perfected.”*

This is the great doctrine that St. Paul announced, when, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he laid down for all Christians the law of obedience: “Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained by God” (Rom. xiii. 1). Whatever it may be, then, and whatever it may do, power, as such, is Divine. It is not something which comes from beneath, for example, from any human will whatsoever, from any fact, or from any contract, or any pretended right of the people, or from any popular vote. Even when these, and similar causes, contribute exteriorly, as often happens, to the historic birth and establishment of any power, they furnish, at most, its matter, by determining its subject; but they do not, nor can they ever give its form—that is to say, that which makes its life, its truth, its sanctity, its solidity, that which constitutes in man the right to command others, and make lawful the acts of its government. It is not, then, once more, anything that comes from beneath;

* *Est hierarchia. . . sacer ordo et scientia et actio quæ ad deformitatem, quantum fas est, accedit atque insitis sibi divinitus illustrationibus proportionem quædam ad Dei subvehitur imitationem. . . Scopus igitur hierarchiæ est Dei, quanta fieri potest, assimilatio conjunctioque; quem cum habeat omnis sacræ et scientiæ et operationis ducem, ad divinissimum ejus decorem constanter intuendo, eundem, quoad potest, exprimit nec non divinos sui consortes sacra quædam perficit simulacra speculaque clarissima et immaculata, quæ primitivæ lucis summæque deitatis radium excipiant: cujus indito splendore sacro plena, denuò eundem ex divinis legibus, in ea quæ sequuntur sine invidiâ transfundunt.—De Cœlesti Hierarch., cap. iii., 1, 2.—Hierarchia nostra Deo insitæ ac divinæ deificæque scientiæ nec non afflationis et perfectionis est functio.—De Ecclesiast. Hierarch., cap. i., 1.*

like light, like grace, like all that the earth receives from Heaven, and can only receive from Heaven : it is something that comes from on high.

God never abdicates, nor does He ever suffer an eclipse. The orders He issues are not with a view of dispensing Himself from interfering. If He commands us to work in His Name, it is not that He should stand still, contenting Himself with looking idly on the labours of those whom He deposes to work. He has many ministers, He cannot have substitutes ; and, far from giving us occasion to think that He absents Himself, these forms which He borrows signify that He is present, as the organs He employs oblige us to think that He is working. It is a necessity that the first cause should act in all secondary causes, and that it should be in them the principal agent ;* it is an equal necessity that the Supreme Power should really and principally rule, by means of intermediate powers, those who are naturally subject to it. The instituted power is only a living mirror placed over a certain number of beings, to throw back upon them the higher light which it reflects ; it is necessary, consequently, that this light should throw its rays first upon the mirror. Power is only an image, and a sort of consecrated seal, which should impress the Divine form on all those to whom it is applied. The seal ought, then, first of all, to resemble its prototype, and to give its exact impression. Thus you see that Almighty God is the beginning and end of all the hierarchy, of which He is also the model, and it is He Who is its indispensable, continued, and active foundation ; from which it follows that He is the first and principal author of all it does, of the gifts it distri-

* S. Thom. 1 p. Quæst. civ., 2, o. la 2da. Quæst. xix.

butes, of the efforts it makes, and of the holy work it instigates. Whence it comes that these created powers are so real and so holy; whence it comes that they lay claim to the religious respect, and the faithful obedience of all; whence it comes, finally, that, according to the express declaration of the Holy Spirit, they cannot be resisted without resisting the order of God Himself, and without incurring His reprobation (Rom. xiii. 2).

If such are the hierarchical powers, it is clear that, like that Divine Sovereignty from which they emanate, and which they imitate, they have each, in its measure, and for the end allotted to it, all the essential attributes of power. They have, then, yes, they also, the right of notifying commands, they can establish true laws. Every being invested with power is a father; now, like unto Him, "of Whom all paternity in Heaven and earth is named" (Ephes. iii. 15); He has His own word. This word which He announces is the law which He establishes. Every being clothed with power is a prince, which is the same thing as to say he is a principle: a principle of light, of life, of unity, of progress, of sanctity, of happiness. Now, like that absolute principle which has no origin, but which begets eternally another principle equal to Himself, every prince has the power to send forth a principle which is like himself, and this principle he sends forth is the legislation he institutes. Briefly, He Who is the Son in that adorable Trinity, which St. Dionysius somewhere calls the *Thearchy*,* is precisely the law in the created hierarchy; it emanates from power, as the Son from the Father, and as He is, so is the power, the splendour, the character, the image of that from which it proceeds.

* De Divin. Nomin., cap. x., 1.

Now, what are those laws which emanate from the hierarchy? It is clear that first of all this hierarchy adores, confesses, promulgates, publishes, propagates, explains the Divine law. It is on this law it is founded; it is on this law that it lives, and in virtue of this law that it operates. Before becoming "the minister of God for good," all power is necessarily His subject and His servant. "To serve God, is to reign." Yes; but also to reign, is to serve God. The hierarchy assimilates itself, then, first to that supreme law, and identifies itself with it as much as possible. This is its first duty, and its first function. Then, we have just said, it promulgates this law and interprets it; this is what that eminent power which is the Church has alone the mission to do here on earth in a sovereign and infallible manner. Further, it applies this law, watches over its execution, and procures its accomplishment by all the lawful means it has at its disposal. Lastly, the hierarchy establishes laws which, though they are secondary, accidental, and relative, are not the less true laws, and consequently binding on the conscience of those who are subject to them. This power also imposes certain particular duties on those whom it rules, duties which are grounded on Divine, or even human reasons, but always of a superior order, and in view of some general good. As the prism, which, dividing the sun's ray, renders perceptible to our eyes its different colours, which we cannot otherwise discern; as by breaking the bread, and, if need be, by crumbling it, the mother enables the child to get nourishment from it; as by spelling syllables for it, she teaches it to pronounce words, and by words to understand the sense of the thoughts which they signify; thus, by these fractions

and these special applications of the law, one and eternal, by these practical formulas, by these words abridged, and, as it were, harmonised, the legislator makes the truth, the beauty, the goodness—in one word, the divinity, which is the essence of that first and adorable law; the legislator, I say, makes all this penetrate the thoughts of men, their wills, and their actions.*

Such are human laws, whether ecclesiastical or civil: the expression of the power which God communicates to men, and the active form of the right which is inherent in Him; whence we see that it is the same, exactly, with law as with power, and that, as we remarked before, these are the two realities equally Divine, having, both of them, the same right, which gives birth to the same duties. The Divine law, you have seen, is the sun of the firmament of souls; human laws, if we may say so, are the stars—the former rules the day, the latter the night (Gen. i. 16), permitting us to see clearly and to walk safely, where the shades of our ignorance and the darkness of our passions naturally hinder us from discerning our way.

Is there any need to remark, that these secondary laws, however high their authority, remaining, as they do, far below the Divine law, have neither its perfection nor its stability; that, consequently, they continue entirely subordinate to it, and are always subject to its sovereign rule and control? If, then, in the use he makes of his power, the ruler exceeds his authority—if, especially, he is a traitor to it, and abuses his power against him from whom he has received it simply as a loan, he ceases to be an authoritative power and becomes a tyrant, and loses all the right he had to be obeyed. In the same way, if human laws contradict those of

* Cfr. S. Thom. P. 2da. Quæst. xci., 3. o. et. Quæst. xcvi.

God—if, especially, they claim or weaken His right, or hinder His action, they are no longer laws, but acts of violence; and if, sometimes we may be constrained to suffer them, they are in no way binding on the conscience.* It follows, and it is the conclusion, at once consoling and glorious, of this Divine theory—it follows, that really there is for us but one power and one law; and as, while here on earth, we have many fathers and masters, yet we have only one Father Who is God, and only one Master Who is Christ (St. Matt. xxiii. 9), so, in submitting freely to so many created wills, which are charged to rule over our own, we do, in fact, only the will of God—"the sole supreme rule of our actions," says Saint Thomas, since it is their beginning by His power, as it is their end by His beatifying love.

It is thus, then, that under the veil and by the action of the hierarchy, under the form and by the ministry of powers and of laws, God, according to Saint Dionysius, holds all under His dominion, governs all without any entanglement; it is thus that He, Who is the source of all amiability, the central object of all desire, it is thus that God imposes on all beings noble bonds and voluntary yokes, and by this means subjects them all to the fructifying ardours of that Divine, and almighty, and ever incorruptible Goodness, by which they have the happiness of being loved.†

* S. Th. P. 2. Q. xcvi. 4, o. Lex humana in tantum habet rationem legis in quantum est secundum rationem rectam; et secundum hoc manifestum est quod à lege æternâ derivatur. In quantum verò à ratione recedit, sic dicitur lex iniqua et sic non habet rationem legis, sed magis violentiæ cujusdam.—*Id. ib.* 9, xciii. 3, ad 2.

† Dicitur omnitenens Deus ut omnia dominatu suo tenens et qui iis quæ gubernat præest immistè, et ut omnibus desiderabilis et

Such is the Christian theory, and therefore the true theory, the only true theory, of power. Such is consequently the foundation of obedience, whether Christian or religious; such are its true principles, which ought invariably to regulate its practice.

It is worse than useless to inquire if, to rule His creatures, God might have instituted a different order. Who will put a limit to His almighty Power? But, in fact, it is this order which He has been pleased to establish; and no one can reflect upon it without being ravished with its beauty and struck with its suitableness. We cannot conceive of any arrangement, which, while it is a splendid revelation of the attributes of God, could be, in all respects, more honourable for us, more conformable to our nature, more suited to our wants—I may say, to our weakness—or finally, one more salutary and more advantageous. We shall see this more clearly while studying the rich treasures hidden in the virtue of obedience; but the truth is, that under whatever aspect we consider this wise and beneficent economy, we cannot help being penetrated with an enthusiastic adoration for Almighty God, Who has deigned to establish it. The mystery of grace does not more profoundly move the soul enlightened from on High, than does this mystery of the Divine Sovereignty, sanctifying and saving us by the action of the hierarchy. The forms of these two mysteries are, doubtless, different; but their substance is one and the same, and this substance is goodness itself and love. This is so true, that when love arrives at that point when the will of man is in a manner identical with

amabilis et cunctis juga voluntaria imponens et dulces parturitiones amoris divini et omnitenentis et insolubilis ipsius bonitatis.—S. Dion., *De Divin. Nomin.*, cx. I.

the Divine will, "the law, passing then," says the Scripture, "into the midst of the heart" (Ps. xxxix. 9), and becoming to it a centre, "the soul," to use Saint Paul's words, "is no longer under the law, but under grace," the law not being made, nor having the least reason for being made, for this just man, who is a law to himself, and for whom it is all one, to live, and to live well (Rom. vi. 14 ; 1 Tim. i. 9).

David saw these things and felt them, when, inspired by God, he chanted in honour of the law that canticle, so learned, so full, so affectionate—the hundred and eighteenth Psalm—and which the Church, enlightened in her choice, as he was in his songs, obliges her Priests, her clerics, and her Religious to repeat every morning, in order to consecrate by prayer the first hours of the day, and to take for their own refection every day this their first spiritual repast for the Divine nourishment of their souls. We see by this—I mean, we see in this Psalm, and by this regular recitation of it—the sentiments which the Holy Spirit wishes that we should have of authority, and consequently the esteem and the affection which He requires we should entertain of obedience.

Nothing, in fact, is more important, nothing is more necessary, and truly, nothing is more sacred. Authority is that which again binds earth to heaven ; it is the force that bears up the world ; the holy ark of the human race, the soul of societies and families, the secret of the life of all, and of each one. To touch it wickedly, to rise up against it, to contest it, to deny it, and especially to wish to destroy it, is the great *impiety*, because we cannot do this in any way without practically, and at last theoretically, denying the Divine Paternity, which is the principle of piety, and which piety alone recognises and

honours. Thus no one is ordinarily more severely punished than public recusants and the authors of rebellion. The Bible testifies that Core, Dathan, and Abiram, who outrageously revolted against Moses, were swallowed up alive by the opening of the earth, and that the flames escaping from this chasm devoured in an instant those of the people who had sided with the rebellion (Numb. xvi. 32). Now, Saint Jude tells us that these revolters are types (St. Jude, Epistle ii.); they are so by their insolence, they are so by their chastisement, and passing from this world to the other, Saint Peter declares, that among so many of the guilty souls whom hell claims and awaits, there are none whom it demands with more violence, and whom it will torment more furiously, than the despisers of power, the lawless, the seditious, and to use a word, now very common and most justly applicable to them, the revolutionists (2 Pet. ii. 9). This contemptuous and violent spirit of insurrection is, in other respects, one of the usual marks of the reprobate, and all bad people have it. One of the names of their leader is Belial: the word means, to be *without yoke*. It is, then, the proper name of that untamed, lost, and savage being, who leaps rather than walks, who goes everywhere out of the beaten paths, who hates all order, who is never fixed in anything, who never yields even to love, and who can only be restrained by force. Such is Satan; such are his children, who cry out with him: "I will not serve" (Jerem. ii. 20); and who, for having refused to be servants, are already slaves, and will be so for eternity. On the contrary, and necessarily, the mark of the good, of the just, of Saints, of those whom Scripture calls "the sons of wisdom," or, rather, "the children of light," or, better still, "the children of God" (Eccles. ii. 1),

the mark of their origin, their natal spirit, the essential character of their soul and of their life, is docility and love. Saint Peter calls them by their true name ; they are the "sons of obedience" (1 Pet. i. 14). Such are all true Christians.

Now, as we have already told you—and you may now comprehend it more easily than ever—there are found, even among Christians, some who, having a more perfect understanding of these mysteries, feel in themselves a more passionate hunger after justice ; and seeing that justice among men means especially obedience, it is after obedience that they hunger. These Divine forms of power and of law ravish them ; they see God radiating through them, and working by their means, God, Whom they would wish to serve, even though it were no profit to themselves. The view of the world also urges them on ; so many senseless revolts of which they hear the history, though they do not witness them themselves, awaken in their heart a zeal for holy reparations, and obedience even to sacrifice, brings to them only a soothing calm. Above all, they consider that Jesus, while on earth, was not obedient to God only ; He chose human superiors. He rendered obedience to Mary and to Joseph (St. Luke ii. 51) ; later on, though He was a King, He willed to show Himself subject to the authorities, which more or less, according to rule, governed His own nation. Wicked as they were, and in spite of the abuses of which they were guilty, Annas, Caiphas, and Pilate held their power from on high. Far from forgetting this truth, Jesus reminds them of it in their very presence, and therefore He gave them both respect and submission. He had, besides, all His life practised this law of the Jews, which was so rigorous,

because it was made for sinners, and which went so much into detail, because its object was to hold in check, by engaging their attention, a people deplorably weak. From the circumcision unto the last passover, when this law expired, so to speak, while in His Hands, He had not ceased to fulfil it ; and so much so, that He tells us that He did not pass over one jot or one tittle of it (St. Matt. v. 18), but fulfilled it all. These views decide such souls. They cannot be contented with obedience to ordinary authorities, or to general laws ; they want guides nearer to them, laws more restrictive ; their desire is for directions more numerous and more pressing, commandments which determine their actions in their every detail ; precepts which bind their whole life and their very being in that close and strong net-work, that the Scripture tells us is made by Wisdom, and which it calls “a healthful binding” (Eccles. vi. 31). They choose a Rule, which is ordinarily written by a Saint, always, at least, approved by Holy Mother Church—that is to say, by the Holy See ; this Rule is to them their Gospel ; and, under the authority and direction of a particular Superior, they engage themselves solemnly to keep it unto death. By this means they are truly and actually constituted Religious. It is clear, in fact, that this is the perfection of that detachment to which a free being can reduce himself, as also the greatest sacrifice that one can offer to God ; since, having already consecrated and delivered over to Him his goods and also his body by the vows of poverty and of perpetual chastity, by making the vow of obedience, he entirely abandons his will to God, which is to give Him his whole soul (for the will is the chief and highest part of the soul), and truly to give Him his whole life, of which the will is naturally the mistress and the governess.

In this consists religious obedience, the term and the coronation of Christian obedience. You have understood its reasons, its nature, and doubtless its beauty. Before explaining to you the numerous duties it imposes, we ought, according to our promise, to say something to you of the Divine graces it includes, and the incomparable advantages it ensures.

II.

The doctrine of the Divine origin of power, and of the use God makes of it to deify His creatures, is the star which enlightens all that vast region of morals of which obedience is the queen. It is, then, in the light of this holy doctrine that we must seek, and that we are certain to find, the graces and advantages which this virtue of obedience contains: signal graces and admirable advantages, which, in their essence and foundation, are the same for Christians as for Religious, but which are higher and of greater extent in the exact proportion in which obedience is greater and more perfect, and are therefore much more considerable for Religious than for simple Christians.

The first of these heavenly gains is, that by the fact of the obedience we render to it, the hierarchy brings obviously together God and the creature, and establishes, in consequence, between the creature and God communications which are free, sure, and of an infinite value. We have, doubtless, hinted this in what we have already said, and we could not give you the true idea of power without giving you clearly the knowledge of this consequence; but we must examine it more closely.

The Jews were fond of celebrating in their canticles the privileges with which God had honoured them. The

greatest of all, and the source of the rest, was that special residence which God had promised to have in the midst of them, and which established constant communications between them and Him. We read everywhere in the Scripture the assurance of this Divine favour. The Tabernacle, and later on the Temple, was the personal dwelling-place of God (Exod. xxix. 45). The mountain of Sion was His abode, the abode of His choice ; He there finds His good pleasure, and declares that there He found His repose (Ps. lxvii. 17 ; cxxxi. 13). It is the seat of His government over this people, and enables them to see how He is their God. Certainly He is the God of all (Wisd. xii. 13 ; Rom. iii. 29) ; but none of the nations belong to Him on the same title as Juda ; none are so dear to Him as Israel. God discovers to Israel His secrets, He confides to Israel His plans, He makes Israel the depository of His mysteries ; He delivers to her that holy seed from which should spring one day the Messiah ; He makes known to her His ordinances ; He regulates, even to the least details, the worship He expects of her, as also of that life He wishes her to lead in the domestic, civil, and political order. He follows her in those ways which He Himself had first traced out for her ; He moulds, He reproveth, He corrects, He chastises her, He encourages, He sustains, He consoles, He rewards her ; often, the better to aid her in present exigencies, He reveals to her the future ; finally, being her God, He is also her King, her Legislator, her Preceptor, her Provider, and truly her Father. Therefore with a heart impressed with such especial solicitude, and so marked a tenderness, Israel exclaimed exultingly, "He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them"

(Ps. cxlvii. 20). Moses had already said : "Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh to them as our God is present to all our petitions" (Deuteron. iv. 7).

But if the Jews had already the right to make their boast thus in the Lord, what reason have not Christians to do so? If the Law made God to draw near to man, what proximity does not the Gospel establish between them? Compared with that presence which God so graciously bestows upon us, that which Israel had among them was, in a manner, almost the effect of absence. And indeed, how, unless this were so, did the just so often cry out, and with so many tears, beseech Him to descend, to come, to appear, as He had so long promised to do? I am not speaking of the human life of this God become one of us, and taking a place in our history. That life of Jesus, of which the Gospel contains the inspired recital, that life which we know from our very infancy, and which the Church is incessantly repeating to us—that life which the revelations of Saints illustrate, of the facts of which our memory is ever suggesting some remembrance, and which our imagination has the power of reviving; it is clear that this life of Jesus places God within our reach, and, so to speak, always at hand. It enables us to see Him openly, and gives occasion for all sorts of relations between God and ourselves, of mutual conversations, and of ravishing intercourses. But who can say, to what a degree the Eucharist renders this God our own, and who can speak worthily of that intercourse, which, thanks to It, becomes possible, real, easy, and necessary, between Him and ourselves? In this Blessed Sacrament, God is more than a close neighbour to man, He is given to him; and the inter-

change that such a gift authorises, the intimacy it permits, or rather, what it calls for, cannot be surpassed but by that immediate vision, and that consummated possession which we call the state of glory, and which is the summit of our hopes, and, at the same time, the perfection of our virtues. Thus the Eucharist is the principal honour of Christians, the inexhaustible source of their light, of their sanctity, of their joy, the burning and inextinguishable centre of the Church's life.

Now, if we reflect upon it, we shall easily be convinced that the practice of obedience, and especially that which is implied by the vow made in Religion, establishes between God and the soul a communication, which, if it is not more intimate than that of the Holy Eucharist, is at least more intelligible, and may be more frequent.

The day when, according to the form prescribed by your Constitutions, a Superior, whoever he may be, has been regularly established in his charge, in the name of God, the source of all power, in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, Vicar of Christ on earth, the source of all jurisdiction, and the first Superior of all Religious Communities,* there took place in your monastery something analogous to what takes place on the altar at the moment of consecration. I mean to say, that as, at the moment when the Priest who holds the bread, finishes the sacred formula, Jesus Christ, the Man-God, takes the place of that bread, and renders Himself substantially present under the sacramental species; so from the time that all the canonical conditions of the election or of the nomination are fulfilled, God renders Himself

* *Votum obedientiæ religiosæ respicit Summum Pontificem tanquam supremum prælatum uniuscujusque religionis.*—Suarez. *De Statu Relig.* lib. x., cap. 11.

really present in a very particular manner, in the person of the Superior who has been chosen. In both cases, it is to the human intelligence a pure mystery of faith ; but in both cases, it is in itself, a Divine reality.

You know what the Lord said to Solomon the day on which the dedication of the Temple was celebrated : “ I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, which thou hast made before Me : I have sanctified this House which I have built, to put My Name there for ever, and My Eyes and My Heart shall be there always ” (3 Kings ix. 3). Every Religious Superior is also a temple ; the day of his appointment is that in which this temple is dedicated. God places in him, His power, His right, His strength ; He fixes on him His Eyes and His Heart ; His Eyes to watch over the souls which are entrusted to his care ; His Heart, to incline Itself towards them ; His Eyes to conduct them, His Heart to love them. Every Superior thus becomes a sort of human sacrament, of which the appearances remain, like those of the Eucharist, small, frail, and miserable, but, which, like those of the consecrated bread, really contain God, in order to transmit Him to men. God is in the water of Baptism to regenerate the soul, and to communicate to it the life which is supernatural ; He is in the Holy Chrism to make that soul to grow, and to render it divinely manly ; He is in the absolution of the Priest to remit the sins of those who come to confess them with proper dispositions : He is substantially under the species of bread and wine, to nourish the life of grace, which Baptism gives us, and which penance repairs, after its life has been destroyed by sin. You believe all this on the word of Christ : believe then, on this same word, that by the same power, to which nothing is impossible,

God is present in this creature invested with power ; and understand, all you especially who live in Religion, that the end of this presence of grace, is to fashion you to sanctity, and to conduct you surely in that way of perfection to which you are pledged by the state you have embraced.

But who does not see that by these Superiors, God speaks to you more intelligibly, more practically, more after a human manner, than He does by the Eucharist ? The Eucharist is the bread of life, authority is the bread of light ; the Eucharist sustains you in the way, authority shows you the way ; the Eucharist is the manna, the bread of Angels falling from heaven, and becoming the food of man ; authority is the Angel of God, or rather God Himself in the person of an Angel, taking man by the hand, and leading him to his final end. The human race, with regard to God, has in itself, two essential wants : the want of knowing and contemplating this one Being whom he designates under the great Name of God, in a sphere of life and state infinitely superior to all that his experience reveals to him, in order to be able to admire, adore, and love Him, without measure ; and also the no less intense want of possessing this God as his own property, to be close to Him, to have recourse to Him for all things, and to enjoy Him at liberty. Man has always needed a God transcendant above all others, and also domestic gods ; the God of Heaven on high, and here below, the gods of the family hearth. Authority answers to this latter want, and satisfies it, as soon as we consent to obey it.

You are in disquietude, your conscience is embarrassed ; you have lost your way, you doubt as to what is your duty and the will of God in your regard. Well, you then

go and prostrate yourself before the tabernacle, or, better still, you go to Holy Communion, if you can do so; you will receive many graces, since you find there, and receive there, Jesus. But if actually you have only the Eucharist to resolve your doubts, does it not happen, that in nine cases out of ten, you quit the altar in the same uncertainty in which you approached it; and if, sometimes, it should appear that by it you had arrived at some practical decision, would you not always run the risk of being the sport of some illusion? Jesus, in fact, is not there to resolve difficulties and settle cases of conscience, He is there to nourish souls, and to give them an increase of Divine life. This is the reason why, knowing your necessities, and careful to provide for them, He has made each of your Superiors a sort of speaking Eucharist; and when, like Saul on the road to Damascus, you address to Him that question, which is the question of your life—not to say the only one, and which we are led to ask almost at each step of our way—“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts ix. 7).. He answers you, as He did the future Apostle: “Arise, go into the city, and there find Ananias”—My priest, My seer, My human mouth—“it is he that will tell thee what thou shalt do.” Go, then, hesitating and inquiring soul, go, find your Father and your Mother; make known to them your difficulty, they will extricate you from it; confide your inclination to them, they will tell you if it is from God; mention to them your temptation, they will remove it—in a word, they will make known to you what I ask, what I expect of you—what, in order to be agreeable to Me, you ought now to think of, what you should wish, and what you should do. “He who hears them, hears Me” (St. Luke x. 16).

He who obeys them, obeys Me; so much so, that in doing their will, you will be sure to do Mine.

And further, if you had the purity of Saint John or the fervour of Magdalen, yet you would not be able to communicate more than once a day, and would you communicate every day? But, thanks to My Presence in the power which governs you, you can, a hundred times every day, have recourse to Me, approach Me, converse with Me, listen to Me, and thus obtain the light you seek. By this means there is nothing that can happen to you during your life, that you may not submit to Me and have regulated by Me; that I cannot thenceforth adjust to My designs, stamp with My approval, penetrate with My sap, and render for ever the object of My good pleasure. By this means—I mean, by this faith—which discovers Me to you under the veil of your Superiors, and by the obedience you render to Me in their person, you are here upon earth never alone. I said, in the days of my pilgrim life: “My Father Who hath sent Me, hath not left Me alone (St. John xiv. 10); the Father Who abideth in Me, He doeth the works.” The obedience in which you live extends even to you the mystery of this companionship and the benefit of this assistance. It realises in perfection what I have promised in the Gospel, namely, to remain with My own, even to the consummation of the world (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). And it is of this obedience that I have said also, that the Good Shepherd, having called His sheep by their names, and having led them out of the fold, goes before them, to walk at their head, so that they hear His voice, and have nothing to do but to follow Him (St. John x. 3).

This first gain of obedience cannot be fully appreci-

ated. However, it does still more than impress on all our actions a Divine direction, by opening and subjecting the soul to all the Divine wills, made known to it by authority in an explicit manner ; it enables us to have communion with God, and this is the second advantage that it ensures to every one who practises it.

David lays down an universal law when he says : "That life is in the good Will of God" (Ps. xxix. 6). It is to this Will that all beings owe their origin ; it is from this Will that they derive that life with which the Eternal Wisdom has ordained that they shall be provided. The secret of the world's life is its dependence upon its Creator. "It continues," sings the Royal Prophet, "in its regularity, in its beauty, in its splendour, because it serves God and obeys His ordinances" (Ps. cxviii. 91). In fact, nowhere in the visible universe can we trace any movement which, in the least degree, resembles what, in the moral order, ascetics call self-will ; meaning, by self-will, that affected independence which comes of insubordination, and which places a being apart, and reduces it to itself. The Holy Spirit curses the being who is isolated—that is to say, most assuredly the being who takes care of himself, retires apart—who does not attach himself to anything, and does not depend upon anybody (Eccles. iv. 10). It is clear that the inevitable state of such a being is sterility and death. Under pretext of giving freedom to the body, if you isolate it from the soul, which gives it life only by having rule over it ; there is nothing left but a corpse, which will soon become dust. Thus would it be with the world, if it isolated itself from God and ceased to obey Him. But what it does, is very far from this ; for if it should happen, that by the tyranny of man or of the demon, those

things that are naturally subject to man, are turned aside from this end, violently torn away from the law of their nature, and employed for evil purposes, this goes so straight against their most essential inclination, and consequently does them so great a violence, that, according to the saying of Saint Paul, "They groan and are in labour," expecting, with impatience, that supreme and absolute deliverance, which the advent of the reign of God will bring to every creature suffering thus unjustly (Rom. viii. 23).

Now, as this necessary submission of beings without reason, to the Wills of their Creator, is the cause of their life, so the obedience of free and reasonable beings is the rigorous condition of that higher life for which the munificence of God destines them. "Natural necessity," says Saint Thomas, "gives place here to a necessity of justice, and the power which moves gives way to the authority which obliges."* In the main, the law remains the same, and no one lives but by taking his place under it.

Thence it comes, that to sin, is positively to deprive oneself of life. Here the chastisement does not come afterwards, as is the case in the judgments of human justice—the culpable act carries its penalty in itself, and this penalty which it incurs is only the inevitable effect it produces. He who is obedient, on the contrary, opens his being to life. The Scripture throughout teaches us this truth: "Keep My laws and My judgments," saith the Lord; "which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Levit. xviii. 5); and elsewhere: "Join

* Sicut naturali necessitate, omnia naturalia subduntur divinæ motioni, ita etiam quâdam necessitate justitiæ omnes voluntates tenentur obedire divino imperio.—2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. 4.

thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end" (Eccles. ii. 3). It is not a question here, you understand, of the natural life of the soul only. "The commandment of God," said Jesus, "is life everlasting" (St. John xii. 50)—it is at once the revelation of Him and the way to Him; it teaches us how to gain it, and it begins by bringing into it all whom it finds submissive. This is the reason why we have thought it right to say, that obedience is a true communion.

The life of God, in fact—in so far as He thinks it good to impart it to us—is for us in His Will: whosoever does this will, in him this life flows and continues. What faith is to the truth which God teaches us, obedience is to the life He proposes to us. Our Lord said to the Jews: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting. . . . Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead,—this is the bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die" (St. John vi. 27—49). What, then, is this better nourishment, which, conspiring against death, makes us live for eternity? "Doubtless," continued Jesus, "it is this new bread, this bread more than angelic, which is My Flesh immolated for the salvation of the world; but it is also the will of My Father Who is in Heaven. I have said: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me' (St. John iv. 34). I have lived on this meat—I have eaten it unto death. I died for having eaten it; but for having thus eaten it, I rose again the third day, and not being able to die any more, I am become, for all who will eat it, after my example, the indefectible cause of a glory and of a happiness which will have no end"

(Heb. v. 9). We eat Divine bread, indeed, when we meditate on the Holy Scripture, for it is that word which proceedeth out of the Mouth of God, and gives life to man. But we eat still more heavenly bread when we obey the laws the Scripture contains; "For the truly just," said Jesus Christ, "and, therefore, those who truly live, are not those who hear the words of God, but those who do what He ordains" (St. Luke xi. 28; Rom. ii. 13). Thus the Wise Man has written, that the precepts of God are a feast, and that he who observes them, sits at a table where there is a Divine entertainment (Ecclus. xxxix. 37). The feasts of earth are of short duration; that of Heaven will never cease: for a Christian, and much more a Religious, does not cease to obey. This is what the admirable Saint Vincent of Paul knew and taught, when he said to the Fathers of the Mission: "God is a perpetual communion to a soul which does His Will."*

Doubtless, as we have already said, this supreme will, and therefore, the life that it contains, is hidden from us under veils; God never acts otherwise in His sacramental operations. This second Eucharist has, then, like the other, its species, its appearances; and these appearances are a human will and a human word, an intermediate superiority—in a word, a creature who, by nature, is our equal. In itself, this goes further, and seems less removed from God, than the matter of the Eucharist; but that is not the question, since, in reference to the interior reality, which alone is important and alone efficacious, it is, in the one case as in the other, only a pure form, an accident, and, as we say, a kind of appearance. Whatever may be the temperament, dispositions, or talents of Superiors, let me tell

* His Life, by Abelly, book iii. ch. 5.

you, in passing, that this difference is simply a fact to be adored, and one of the most touching marks of that indescribable love which God bears you, you especially who have left all for Him. Oh ! how anxious He is, then, for your perfection, since He spares no pains to obtain it ! We have compared the canonical institution of Religious Superiors to the Eucharistic consecration. The analogy goes further. In fact, as after the consecration, all the substance of the bread is changed into the Body of the Lord, Who, in a way we cannot describe, converts it, without partaking of it Himself, into His Own Substance ; so, after the institution of Superiors, their time, their strength, their health, their life, their mind, their heart—what we have a good right to call their substance—is in a manner consumed. Yes, it is absorbed by the commandment they have received, by the power which has been conferred, by the charge they have had imposed upon them. “The burden of the word of the Lord,” repeated the Prophets often, “the burden of the word of the Lord” (*Zach. ix. 1 et passim*). Oh ! how this is felt by those who command ! And to what an extent do they sometimes find by experience, that if God weighs upon them and becomes a burden, He also burns, and that it is not in vain that He is called “a consuming fire” (*Heb. xii. 23*). “Who is weak,” cried out Saint Paul, “and I am not weak ? Who is scandalised, and I am not on fire ?” (*2 Cor. xi. 29*) ; and how many times, like Moses, bending under the burden of his function, they cry secretly to God : “Have I conceived all this multitude, have I begotten them, that Thou shouldst say to me : ‘Carry them in thy bosom as the nurse is wont to carry the little infant, and bear them into the land for which Thou hast sworn to their

fathers?" (Numb. xi. 12). Yes, you see with what a love God embraces these creatures of His, whom He loved as you are loved, perhaps even more than you; with what a love He overcomes them, occupies Himself about them, and wholly possesses them; it is thus that He sacrifices Superiors for you; for you can clearly see that your Superiors are your victims, being, first of all, the victims of God.

But He Who, for the love of man, delivered Himself up, and was the first to be immolated; He Who feared not to purchase, at the price of many millions of martyrs, the universal evangelisation and conversion of the peoples to the truth, has in like manner consented that for the sanctification and the salvation of His dear Religious, there should always and everywhere be in communities one devoted Being, Who, having become His Own prey, and reduced to the state of a victim, should give himself in communion to others. It is thus, that at their expense, but not without great merit, your Superiors are among you the sacrament of God, and deliver Him to you as nourishment. Remind yourselves, then, incessantly that by their interposition, that, thanks to their authority, under those ephemeral, weak accidents of their dignities and persons, the Divine substance comes to you—that substance which is light, truth, wisdom, justice, goodness, stability, perfect felicity; in a word, eternal life. It passes into the obedient soul, penetrates it, assimilates it to itself, and thus making it more and more conformable to its Divine type, which is Jesus Christ, as much as is possible deifies it; which is the term and the fruit of every true communion. No one has better known these things than the great Saint of obedience, Saint Ignatius, the illustrious founder of the

Society of Jesus. The obedient soul, he wrote, passes beyond the level of Christian obedience, and advances with gigantic strides towards the highest degree of glory and of dignity. Disengaging himself from the chains of his own nature, he unites himself by the closest bonds, and in the most intimate manner, to God, the sovereign good, and becomes clothed with His nature; and, as God is wont to fill the soul of man, in the degree in which He finds it free from whatever is an obstacle to His influences—that is to say, from self-will—it follows that whoever arrives at this perfect obedience has a right to borrow from the Apostle that saying which we may name the formula of sanctity: “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* This is the second and marvellous advantage the soul finds in obedience.

But if obedience thus brings God and man together, and effects man’s union with God, of what good must it not be the source? Would it not be that wisdom of which Solomon said: “All good things came to me together with her” (Wisd. vii. 11); and, in fact, besides those benedictions which the particular love of God for David, his father, ensured to him, what was it that opened the heart of this prince to the many graces which were heaped upon him? Was it not the humble prayer which he made at the commencement of his reign? God had said to him: “Ask what thou wilt that I

* *Insuper humanæ conditionis sortem prætergressus, ad sublimiorem dignitatis gradum maximè provehitur: propriæ si quidem naturæ impedimentis exutus, Deo summo bono, cujus naturam induit, arctissimè copulatur; qui quidem hominis animum eatenùs replere consuevit quoad suâ ipsum voluntate non offenderit occupatum; ut sanè, quibus hùc evadere contigerit, jure liceat illud usurpare. “Vivo jam non ego, vivit verò in me Christus.”—St. Ignat. Epist. ad Scholast. Coll. Gand, Lib. ii. Epist. 19, Jul. 1547.*

should give thee." He replied immediately : " O Lord God, Thou hast made Thy servant king, instead of David my father, and I am but a child, and know not how to go out and to come in : give, therefore, to Thy servant an obedient heart " (3 Kings iii. 7, 9).^{*} Now, this prayer pleased the Lord, says the sacred writer ; and from that time were dated those prodigious gifts which rendered this king wise, learned, and illustrious among all the monarchs of the East.

First :—it is clear that obedience enables us to accomplish at once the whole of Christian justice. It shelters the soul from sin. We only sin by disobeying : far from sinning, he who obeys, does just the contrary of what is evil. A will docile to God is necessarily a regulated will, and the soul whose will is regulated is necessarily a pure and innocent soul. In hell there is no obedience, because the will is there eternally fixed in a radical opposition to God. In heaven, on the contrary, there is always obedience, because God reigns there without dispute and without limits, and because love, now henceforth consummate, causes, between the Divine will and that of the blessed, a unity which is perfect. Upon earth, we can, at our will, obey or disobey ; but if we obey, if we are decided in obeying always, if, especially, we have made a vow of obedience, we are fixed, as far as it is possible here below, in the state of heaven itself.

But, not only the obedient do not commit sin : we may say that they put themselves almost out of the state of committing it, as far as this world admits ; they dry up its source in the soul. " O, happy liberty," exclaimed St. Jerome, " which, once gained, renders it almost im-

^{*} In the Douay version. " an understanding heart."

possible to sin.”* In fact, giving up our will entirely to God, obedience rescues it at the same time from the inferior powers of the soul, which try to surprise and enchain it; it withdraws it from bad passions, from the perverse influences of flesh and blood, from the lower appetites, from the fascinations of the senses, from illusions, from passions, from fancies, from weaknesses, from vain fears, from pride, and finally, from all the united powers of the world and the devil. How can evil penetrate into a soul thus sheltered and protected from all that can make war against it? We are all agreed that self-will is the principle of all our faults, and, in the end, of all damnation. Now, obedience kills this self-will. The vow of obedience, says St. Gregory, is, as it were, the priest who immolates it.† It does more than immolate, it buries it, says St. John Climachus, so that, without perjury, it cannot be resuscitated.

We understand, then, the unanimous teaching of the Catholic Fathers and Doctors, that obedience is, in a manner, the mother and the guardian of all the other virtues;‡ that it alone has the secret of implanting them in the soul, to maintain them there, and to make them fructify.§ It supposes and crowns the entire order of virtues which we may call negative, because they all aim

* *O summa libertas quâ obtentâ vix possit homo peccare.*—S. Hieron. in Reg. Mon. cap. 6.

† *Per obedientiam mactatur propria voluntas. Tantò igitur quisque Deum citius placat, quantò ante oculos ejus, repressâ arbitrii sui superbiâ, gladio præcepti se immolat.*—S. Greg. Moral., lib. xxv. c. 10.

‡ *Obedientia in creaturâ rationali mater quodammodò est omnium custosque virtutum.*—S. August., *De Civit. Dei.*, lib. xiv. c. 12.

§ *Obedientia sola virtus est quæ virtutes cæteras menti inserit insertasque custodit.*—S. Greg. Moral., lib. ult., c. xii. Cfr. S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. 8.

at contradicting and ruining the old man in us, and all that opposes the reign of God. Thus it is the seal of renouncement, the highest degree of mortification, the necessary sign of humility; it is the flower of holy fear, the pledge of true patience, the guarantee and the lustre of poverty, the perfection of temperance, and therefore of chastity. And as to the positive virtues, which do not regard the avoidance of evil, nor the destruction of the tendency to evil, but simply what concerns the practice of what is good and the service of God, obedience is so much and so indispensably mixed up with them all, that on various grounds it affects their very life, and not one can exist an instant apart from obedience.

First, according to the remark of St. Thomas, by this sole fact that God commands us to practise them, the acts of all the virtues are connected with obedience; so in order to do everything well and always well, it is sufficient truly to obey.* But further (and everyone can account for it), obedience is also the practice of justice, the principal exercise of strength, the last act and employment of prudence. It constitutes one of the chief acts of religion, according as it is written, "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Kings xv. 22); and elsewhere, "He that keepeth the law multiplieth offerings" (Eccles. xxxv. 1). What more shall we say? It is certainly the noblest fruit of faith, as we see in Abraham, whose faith was sufficiently robust, and sufficiently exalted, for God to propose it to us as an example. It was Abraham's heroic obedience which enabled him as a final triumph of his faith, without hesitation, to raise his arm to immolate His Son (Gen. xxii. 2). It is also the nourishment

* Ad obedientiam pertinent omnes actus virtutum prout sunt in præcepto.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. 3, ad 2.

which consoles hope, and sustains it, so long as we "are absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 6). Nothing, in fact, assuages the soul's thirst for God like obeying Him; nothing so alleviates the burden of the present life, and gives us so much patience to await its end. Nothing renders our hopes so firm, since each of the merits which our obedience gains for us is a fresh reason for counting on the recompense. As to charity, obedience is so closely united to it, that it seems, in fact, confounded with it. "He that saith that he knoweth Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," saith St. John. "But he that keepeth His word, in him, in very deed, the charity of God is perfected" (1 St. John ii. 4). And why? "Because," says St. Thomas, "the property of love is to cause an entire sympathy of wills between those who love."* Long ago the Wise Man had said: "And the ease of discipline is love; and love is the keeping of her laws, and the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption, and incorruption bringeth near to God" (Wisdom vi. 19). "Greater love than this no man hath," said Jesus, "that a man lay down his life for his friends" (St. John xv. 13); whence it follows, that for us, martyrdom appears to be the perfection of love. Yet he who lays down his life must believe that he is doing the will of God, and following the movement of His grace, and that he acts thus with a view of pleasing Him;† for if, as it has happened, we become martyrs through our own

* In hoc charitas Dei perfecta est quia amicitia facit idem velle ac nolle. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. 3, o.

† Quæcumque alia virtutum opera ex hoc meritoria sunt quod fiunt ut obediatur voluntati divinæ. Nam si quis etiam martyrium sustineret... nisi hoc ordinaret ad impletionem divinæ voluntatis, quod rectè ad obedientiam pertinet, meritorium esse non posset,

will, I do not say through vainglory or fanaticism, but only without prudence and by presumption, we should run the risk of succumbing through weakness, or of losing in the other world all the benefit of our martyrdom. It is necessary, then, that, in a certain way at least, martyrdom should be consecrated by obedience. But St. Ignatius goes farther, and does not fear to affirm that, in certain respects, obedience is greater than martyrdom; and he gives this evident reason for it: that he who thus faces death sacrifices, it is true, that natural and strong desire that man has to preserve his life, but he who makes profession of obedience sacrifices at once all his natural desires, and he cuts them up by the roots.*

What simplicity of life does this virtue produce in us! It reduces everything to one single point of view, to one single duty, to one single act; by it we give satisfaction in everything, and, as far as possible, to everybody, by doing always the same thing, the doing of which never wearies us, for it is what the Angels and the Blessed are always doing in Heaven, and the doing of it is already Heaven.

While making our life so simple, obedience opens out for us at the same time a plain and sure way. David speaks of entering into the powers of God (Ps. lxx. 16). It seems this was his most beautiful dream, and therefore his most ardent desire. Obedience leads us even while we are in this world into the sanctuary of His Powers, for it makes us practically participate in His Divine infallibility. A superior may be deceived, and even sin, in commanding; sicut nec si fieret sine charitate quæ sine obedientiâ esse non potest. —S. Thom. *ubi suprà*.

* Neque vitæ solius desiderium, quod fit in martyre, per obedientiam præciditur, sed omnia prorsus ad unum desideria rescantur. —S. Ignat. Epist. *jam cit.*

the inferior cannot either sin or err in obeying. But you have done an act which is imprudent ; you have omitted that work which everybody judged necessary. Lord, I have obeyed ! You have done well, good servant, faithful servant ; it is not a penalty you incur, it is a recompense which is your due. You will have it, be assured. To live under a rule and under authority is to live in the light of holy and Divine examples ; and to obey this authority is to make a life on earth the pure mirror of eternal realities.

In consequence, what profound, immense, unalterable peace ! a holy Pilot watches over me : he answers for my soul, for my virtue, for my perseverance, for my salvation, on the sole condition that I remain in his vessel : if I continue in it, there is nothing that can, that ought, to disquiet me. O holy leisure ! O absence of all cares ! O troubles so far removed, that they are become, as it were, impossible ! O good and sweet vacation which leaves and delivers the whole being to God ! Yet this pilot is a creature : what guarantee does a creature offer me, and what can he do for me ?—To read in himself your wants, to draw from the experience of his own misery, the treasures of indulgence which your own cannot do without, and to compassionate those evils which he has felt himself. Your pilot is a creature : it is true, and this arrangement is particularly good and favourable for you ; further, it is true only in part ; yes, the envelope, the external, the accident, is indeed a creature ; but the power he exercises is not a thing created ; and as you only obey the power, it is really God Who conducts your vessel. “ Divine Providence,” says St. Ignatius, “ is bound in this matter by a contract.” God is bound to tend a soul with persevering patience and love, when it has by

the vow of obedience confided itself to His keeping, and cast itself into His arms.* So the obedient have only to abandon themselves, and as the Saints say after David, to take their rest (Ps. iv. 9). Yes, says St. John Climachus, "in the way of obedience, we make progress even when asleep."† And if obedience gives this security during life, what sweet peace is experienced at death? "With him that feareth the Lord," says the Holy Spirit (with him that fears to offend Him, and, therefore, to disobey Him), "it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death, he shall be blessed" (Eccles. i. 13). To him, death is truly a sleep, the sleep of an infant in the arms of its mother. He dies as our Lord died, Who, having perfectly fulfilled the will of His Father to the last moment of His life, and seeing His task done, gently and sweetly bowed His Head, and said, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit," and while saying this, He gave up the Ghost (St. Luke xxiii. 46).

Obedience, then, makes life simple, calm, and peaceful; it also makes it fruitful, and in degrees that cannot be expressed. There is nothing that a man can naturally do here on earth, which obedience cannot sanctify, spiritualise, and make agreeable to God, and meritorious. It deifies our least works, making them harmonise with the thoughts of God, and stamping them with His character. It is obedience which bears those fruits, of which the Gospel says, that they abide (St. John xv. 6). What is without, and what is within, to all that it touches,

* *Eò plus sibi divinam providentiam humano loquendi modo abstringet ut accuratiùs ab eà dirigatur, quò pleniùs potestati ejus per obedientiam se committet quam superiori præstat Dei personam referenti.*—S. Ignat. Epist. 5 *cit.*

† *Tuta navigatio, confectum dormiendo iter.*—S. Joann. Clim. Gr. iv.

it gives life, and immortal life. Self-love corrupts all, and produces only fruits of death. That which is good in itself becomes bad, as soon as it is mixed with self-love. If God finds it in us, when we fast, He rejects that fast ; when He perceives it in any sacrifice we offer Him, that sacrifice is, then, to Him, only a lie and an abomination (Isaias lviii. 3). On the contrary, let what we do be ever so little, low, vulgar, insignificant, or even easy and agreeable, obedience renders it sublime and worthy of God. It is thus that eating, recreation, even sleeping, by obedience is of account for Heaven, and may be of great account ; much more assuredly than an act otherwise very holy, for example, hearing Mass, receiving Communion, but a mass heard and a communion received, by one's own choice and in the spirit of independence. If, as the Scripture says, "an obedient man shall speak of victory" (Prov. xxi. 28), you see that he has marvellous riches at his command : he gathers them at every step : his days are full, and his life resembles that fertile field, the smell of which rejoiced Isaac when he blessed Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 27), the figure of our Heavenly Father, blessing His obedient children.

People speak much now-a-days of liberty : it is in the present day the great question, the constant theme of violent attacks against the Church, and especially against the religious state. People maintain, and often in good faith (having, on account of their rejecting and forgetting the Christian teaching, so far lost the true notion of things), people maintain that they who are obedient, cease to be free, that they lose their liberty. No doubt, the Religious who makes a vow of obedience, digs a profound abyss between his free will and what is evil, which here below he can, if he will, both choose and do. Acting as

a sovereign, and showing by this act to what an extent God permits him to be his own master, He freely obliges his free will to protect itself against the errors and the weaknesses, of which he knows himself capable. But does this destroy or even diminish his free will? Do we not see, on the contrary, that it is to cure and to save it? If I find out and put in practice the secret of never taking any more a false step in my way, have I cancelled, or lessened my natural power of walking? Have I not rather ensured its perfection and its free exercise? Everything that lives, by following the law of its being, makes progress towards its end, gains strength, maturity, growth, and perfection: it is a common principle and a universal law. "Free will," says St. Thomas, "is not given to man, in order that he may follow all his own fancies, and satisfy all his caprices: it is given to him (making the difference between man and beings without reason), in order that he may not act under the impulse of natural necessity, but by the effect of a free choice derived from the regular exercise of his own powers,"* so that man, thus becoming the author and originator of his own actions, they may be imputed to him for merit, and deserve from God a just recompense. The final end of free will is, then, to procure for man, under the action of His grace (without which he can do nothing supernatural, but which cannot accomplish anything without his co-operation), the final end, I say, of man's free will, is to procure for him that glory and that beatitude, with which

* Deus reliquit hominem in manu consilii sui, non quia liceat ei facere omne quod velit, sed quia ad id quod faciendum est non cogitur necessitate naturæ, sicut creaturæ irrationales, sed liberâ electione ex proprio consilio procedente.—2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. I, ad I.

God has promised to reward his virtues. It follows that its immediate, as distinguished from its final, end, is to establish and maintain us, in such a condition of liberty, that we may be no longer, if possible, either stopped or hindered in our way towards our eternal destiny. Therefore, its first object is to withdraw us from all servitudes, and then likewise from all influences that might hinder our progress. To be able, without contradiction, without difficulty, freely, sweetly, fully, and always, to advance in the truth, to grow in justice, to expand in love, to make progress in sanctity, in fine, to approach our divine ideal by a resemblance more and more exact, and to arrive at that absolute joy which is the fruit of that resemblance when it is consummated ; this, I say, is to be truly free (St. John viii. 34), and whoever has any other notion of liberty, and dreams of it under other forms, and seeks it under other conditions, is deceived, and will bring misery on himself, both in this world and in the next. Is the man free who sins ? Is he free especially after he has sinned ? It is true, the foolish act which he has done supposes and proves that he is free : as the act of him who commits suicide supposes and proves that he is alive. Yes, suicide is the act of one who is living, but an act which plunges for ever this living man in death ; and in the same way sin is the act of a free being, but an act which precipitates this being into a frightful servitude, which in itself is past remedy. "Whosoever commits sin," said Jesus, "is the servant of sin" (St. John viii. 34). As long as this present life lasts, grace and repentance can, without doubt, break this chain : but if the sinner does not repent, if he continues obstinate in sin, his chain becomes so much heavier, and binds him still more closely : and if he dies in this state, then his chain

binds him wholly and for ever, in its iron hold : it is a chain of darkness, of ignominy, of pain, and it is so for ever.

The just, on the contrary, the humble, the obedient, because he has voluntarily broken off with evil, escapes this law of ruin, which St. Paul calls "the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2), and which is the principle of all the servitudes of the soul. He is free with that liberty which Christ has merited for us and which He gives us, with that holy, radiant, and joyous liberty, which is the dawn of the liberty of Heaven, and which the Scripture calls "the liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21).

And the Religious who goes still farther and does much more, the Religious who does not only break off with evil, but with the great occasion of evil, which is the world ; the Religious who practically denies all that naturally could induce him to sin, and especially that ownership of himself, which is the soul of all iniquity, the Religious, I say, is much more free than the Christian in the world. If the latter has feet, the former has wings ; if the one walks and runs in straight and smooth ways, the other takes his flight in an atmosphere which is vast, luminous, and open. None like him can go forward always, and only, and entirely, and by all his movements, and by all his actions, towards God, the one term of his desires, and the only centre of his repose. No one has the right to say, as he can : "O God, Thou hast broken my bonds ; I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. cxv. 17). I had quitted Egypt in leaving sin ; by renouncing the world I have crossed the Red Sea, and I have seen all my enemies drowned in its depths ; without being troubled or disquieted, I may

now eat my manna, chant my hymns, offer my sacrifices; I may pitch my tent wherever the pillar of fire and of a cloud may point the way, and by which this angel of God is my guide. I am not yet, it is true, established in the land of promise; but between that land and myself there is nothing but space and time—the space of a short distance, and the time of a few days. Besides, I see it in the horizon, that land of my hope,—how often already do I feel its breezes and its odours wafted even to me! I am then free; as free as a man can be, who is a pilgrim on the earth. “The truth has made me free” (St. John viii. 32); “The Son of God has set me free” (*Ibid.* 36). I enjoy the liberty of Jesus, because I share fully in the life of Jesus; for, in reality, it is the life of Jesus that I lead: I imitate Him in being poor, I imitate Him in being chaste; but I imitate Him, most of all, in becoming obedient. I enter thus into the inward essence of His state of Son, the essential of this state consisting in this, that the Son does nothing but what He sees the Father do, and that all He sees the Father do He does in like manner (St. John v. 19). By His nature and by His state as God, we understand the mystery of His Eternal generation, by which all that He does and all that He is, He holds of His Father Who has begotten Him; but as to His human nature and human life, this is understood of His obedience, which is the very form of His piety.

Such are, then, in abridgment, the advantages of obedience. One page of St. Catherine of Sienna sums up admirably all that we have attempted to tell you of these advantages. I cannot resist the pleasure of quoting it. The Saint is speaking of God, and we feel, indeed, in listening to her words, that in reality

God is speaking by her mouth: "O sweet obedience," she writes, "amiable, and dear, and resplendent obedience, how glorious thou art, since the other virtues have no being without thee! . . . Thou art a magnificent queen. He who espouses thee is rich with every blessing, and cannot feel any calamity. His days are full of peace, and flow on in sweet repose; the waves of an angry sea cannot injure him by any storms. The centre of his soul is inaccessible to hatred, and injury itself does not move him. . . O sweet obedience! thou art like the Word, My Beloved Son. . . Thus thou art pleasing to all the world; thy face is always serene; thou dost exhale the perfume of sincere humility, and thou desirest nothing of thy neighbour apart from My will. Thou art upright and without subterfuge, because thou makest the heart full of charity; thou art like the aurora, that announces Divine grace. Like the sun, thou warmest him who possesses thee, because the ardour of charity never leaves thee. Every day thou dost fertilise the earth, by causing it to yield, both for body and soul, a fruit which giveth life. . . Thou art a precious pearl, but hidden, which many do not recognise, and which the world treads under foot; but in despising thyself, and making thyself little on any occasion, thou dost elevate those whose conduct thou dost inspire. Thy power is so great that no one can resist thee, because thou art freed from the deadly servitude of sensuality, which destroys all greatness, and reduces the soul to slavery."* And to prove what she says, she shows how this virtue triumphs even over the elements, and compels nature to work miracles. This is, I have already re-

* Dialogues, clv. De l'Obéissance.

marked, the privilege of poverty; and it is, on higher titles, that of obedience.

It remains for us to explain the duties of those who make the vow of obedience.

III.

The same may be said of the duties which obedience imposes, as of the Divine advantages which it procures; both the one and the other have their principle and their power in the Christian duty of authority; and as by knowing the nature of this authority, we can account for what we gain by submitting to it, so by considering this authority, we shall comprehend, in religion especially, in its clearness and its fulness, the submission we are obliged to render it.

First of all, since it is God Who commands by Superiors, it is God Whom we must obey in their persons, and simple Christians, like others, are bound to this obedience. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ, not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephes. vi. 5, 7). Since it is God Who commands by Superiors, we must be disposed to obey them, according to the extent of the right God gives them to command us, and to obey with a practical obedience all their lawful commands. Thus the Israelites understood obedience, when, after the reading of the Law, they all exclaimed: "All things which the Lord hath spoken we will do; we will be obedient" (Exod. xxiv. 7). In fine, since it is God Who commands, His sovereignty extending over the whole creation, there is nothing in that

creation which is dispensed from the duty of obeying Him. In order that obedience should be perfect, it is necessary that the soul as well as the body should bow down to authority, and the soul with all its powers: first, the will and the heart, which inspire and determine our actions; then the mind, which is the source of our judgments. The Apostle insinuated as much when he wrote to the Hebrews: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them" (Heb. xiii. 17).

Thus, obedience should be Divine, universal, and total: Divine in its intention, universal in its extent, and total in its submission. This will give it the requisite proportion with that holy authority, which is the reason of its existence and of its rule.

These three points I have now to make clear.

Obedience, we say, ought to be Divine in its intention—that is to say, that in obeying Superiors, it is God that we should have the intention of obeying. From the text of St. Paul we have quoted, you have seen that this view of God in the person of Superiors is an absolute duty. The doctrine of the Saints on this point is plain and unanimous. St. Ignatius sums it up when he writes to his Religious: "Revere the Divine Majesty in those who command you, and render them obedience with perfect piety."* Observe that it is not a question here of practising something additional, which adds to the perfection of the action which it accompanies, but which does not effect its essence. This regard to God is essential: take it away, and obedience is not even Christian, much less, then, can it be religious.† In fact,

* In superiore quolibet Christus. . . in eo Dominicæ majestati reverentiam atque obedientiam summâ cum religione præstate.—S. Ignat. Epist. 29 ad Conimbr. Coll.

† Rodriguez, in "Christian Perfect."—Part iii., tr. 5, ch. 12.

what is religion? "Something," replies St. Thomas, "which implies a relation of the creature to God; a strength, a virtue which binds us anew to Him, as to our eternal principle and to our last end, at which our liberty ought continually to aim."* How can we call an act religious, if its final object is only man? The duty is then certain, it is indispensable.

Alas! where do we find its practice? How often are Superiors obeyed, because they are wise, good, agreeable; because we fear their blame, or we desire their approbation; sometimes, also, through an interested self-love, more or less disguised, that we may obtain from them, if not particular favours, which their conscience would forbid them to grant, at least, an esteem and a predilection that our heart may feel, and which it would give us joy to suppose! Let us put aside self-love and the interested policy it inspires; it is but too clear that such sentiments spoil all the obedience we may render. Let us speak only of those which may be advocated, as a lawful affection or a natural desire to please. Doubtless, if it helps you to obey, you cannot be blamed for making use of such a means; but if to the piercing Eye of God these human motives are the only ones which induce you to obey, if even they are the principal means, what are you doing—you, who have made the vow of obedience? Once more, you are not doing what is good, what is proper to your state. Will you hear St. Francis of Sales speaking on this subject? You know how sure and sweet he is in his teaching. "You obey your Superiors," he says to his dear daughters of the Visitation, "because

* Religio propriè importat ordinem ad Deum : ipse enim est cui principaliter alligari debemus tanquàm indeficienti principio ad quem etiam nostra electio assiduè dirigi debet sicut in ultimum finem.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. lxxxi., art. 1.

you have a love for them, and because of the reverence you have for their persons. Alas ! you do nothing more than the people of the world, for they do the same ; and not only do they obey the commands of those whom they love, but they would not think their love fully satisfied if they did not study and follow still more closely the inclinations of those they love."

Such being the case, how much merit do we not lose, and what defects may there not be in our virtues? Virtues are habits—habits as far, at least, as they are acquired, can only be formed by repeated acts : such as is the nature of the action, such also is the nature of the habit it helps to form. If, then, when you obey, you follow human attractions—if, in place of submitting yourself to God, because He is God, you simply yield to man for human reasons, will your act, which is not religious, be of any service in forming in your soul a religious habit or virtue? You might not have scandalised your community, you may even have edified it, since it is the exterior only which edifies or scandalises ; you might have gained this end, which, in other respects, is good, of being obliging to your Superiors, and of winning their affections, but you would not really have practised obedience ; and as obedience is the fundamental virtue of your state, your edifice will have no foundation. This is also the instruction of the holy Bishop of Geneva. "I say that if the Religious is not obedient" (we read it in the instruction I have just cited), "he cannot have any virtue, because it is obedience which principally makes him a Religious, as it is the essence and the particular virtue of the Religious life."*

* Conversation xi.—Such is, for Religious, the necessity of obedience, that our Lord said to St. Catherine of Sienna: "The dis-

This point is, then, of consequence, and demands of you a very great attention. See God in your Superiors; if not always actually, which is hardly possible, and, indeed, not necessary, yet let it be your habitual state of mind, and often renew it. God wills that you have this faith; He gives you incontestably the grace for it, and He takes a marvellous pleasure in beholding you correspond with it. Do you know why He so often leaves several defects in those who have authority? Certainly these defects are exaggerated. If an equal so easily sees the mote in the eyes of his equal (St. Matt. vii. 3), how much more is an inferior tempted to see one in the eye of Superiors, who, having charge of his conduct, are therefore obliged to correct him, which cannot be done without they reprove, and, if necessary, punish him. But, we must allow, Superiors have their defects. Why does God permit these defects in them? First, because to appoint a Superior, is not to work a miracle; then, because these defects are generally profitable to those who have them. "Power," God Himself attests, "is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9). Power—that is, virtue—lives in humility; and humility, everyone knows it, can hardly live in us without the experience of our own misery. Who is not aware that imperfections which are notable, visible to everyone, and especially those which are difficult of cure, are, and sometimes necessarily, a counterpoise to the interior exaltation caused by superiority? But do you know another principal reason for these persisting defects? It is, that they are for inferiors a most powerful means of perfec-

obedient is in the bark of the Religious life, in his body, and not in his spirit. He is not a Religious, but a man wearing only the habit of a Religious."—Dial. clxi.

tion. To obey one with whose spirit you have little sympathy, whose character displeases you, whose manners shock you—does it not suppose more virtue than is required to obey one in whom there is great amiability? Were a community to have an archangel for Superior, would their obedience be likely to become so perfect as the obedience of a community (as in so many cases actually happens), which is under the government of some imperfect Religious?

Therefore it is a common rule in the management of religious communities, that, while keeping in their heart that mildness and that compassionate indulgence which parents owe their children; while preserving also habitually in their manner that affability, and that excellent grace which sweetens the yoke and wins submission, Superiors should sometimes examine, by the aid of a command which is somewhat rude, if the obedience which is rendered them is Divine or human, natural or religious. Assuredly, discretion is required here, as everywhere; but this custom is an excellent one. We may read in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, by what trials the ancient votaries tested the obedience of their disciples. These men of God imitated God. Wishing to continue to dwell with us, and not being able conveniently to remain in that form which is natural to Him, our Lord might have concealed Himself under appearances that were attractive. For example, He might have shown Himself under the appearance of a brilliant light, and made manifest His presence by some sweet perfume; and, since He laid Himself out to be our good, He might have taken the taste of honey, or of some exquisite liqueur. But, because what is loss to the senses is gain to faith, and it is the life of grace to immolate

nature, Jesus has chosen the appearances which are the most common ; and, as to taste, the most insipid.

Where are we now in the present day ? Faith is so weak, respect is so rare and so wanting in depth, the love of independence so common, and this even in monasteries, that the ancient trials would only be acts of rashness, and prudent Superiors regard them now as almost impossible. Under pain of causing scandal, authority is forced to be timid, and it is necessary now to work in souls with those precautions, those contrivances, those fears, which we see workmen adopt to support a house which is threatened with ruin. Is not this a great misfortune and a lamentable decay ? “ If the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? ” (St. Matt. v. 13).

It is well, then, for Religious to renew themselves in the spirit of faith as to the presence of God in all of their Superiors. There are in certain orders rules which ordain that they should be spoken to, on bended knees, at least when they are the higher Superiors. If your rule does not enjoin this, and if it is not authorised by the custom of your monastery, I do not say, that you should do it : yet you must have the mind and intention which causes it to be done ; when you approach those who govern you, speak to them with as much reverence and humility, as if you felt yourself interiorly, on your knees before them. That is the very marrow and the sinew of obedience. God Himself revealed to St. Catherine of Sienna, that the first principle of the excellent obedience of Jesus towards His Father, was the continual view His Holy Soul had of the Divinity.* That of which Jesus had the clear vision, you have the certitude of, and the same

* Dialog. cliv.

Divine object which discovered to Him the light of His interior glory, your faith, which is also a light, renders present to your mind. Keep, then, always a light within you, this holy lamp, and walk on in its brightness. Ah ! how your ways will be made clear, how firm will be your steps, how rapid will be your progress, how perfect will soon become your obedience ! How fruitful also will it be ! Behold two Sisters who come one after the other to their Superiors : how is it that one of them goes away enlightened, calmed, content ? How is it that she has understood with an inward relish, whether it is a command or an advice ? Why, with the light, has she borne away with her, unction, grace, and courage ? Whilst the other returns empty, disconcerted, troubled, perhaps vexed ? The only reason is, that the one came full of faith to inquire of God, and receive from Him the answer, whilst the other came quite after a human manner, to converse with a human creature. " If you go to your Superiors, as to God," said the Blessed Magdalen of St. Joseph, " you will receive light and grace from them, as from God Himself, however imperfect they may be ; if you seek in them only the creature, you will receive from them only as from a creature, however holy they may be."

Doubtless, Superiors ought to be the first to believe with a firm and practical faith in their own authority. If they are not persuaded, that though they are nothing of themselves, their power is nevertheless Divine, how can they do the Divine work ? Many fail in this duty, and thence comes the uncertainty, the weakness, and the inefficacy of their government. The faith of the preacher arouses the faith of the hearer ; and in the same way that

* "Maxims of the Saints" collected in "The Sacred Banquet."

of the Superior incites, facilitates, strengthens that of the inferior. But I say to those who are inferiors : if even those who direct you do not sufficiently represent God, if they seem to doubt their right, and command you to act too much after a human manner, it is not for you to judge them ; your duty, in all cases, is to make no mistake in their regard, to look, above all, and in spite of all, to their Divine character, and consequently to consider Jesus in them, and to obey them as Jesus Himself.

Divine by the intention, obedience should be universal in its extent—that is to say, that a Religious ought to yield submission to everyone clothed with legitimate authority, and he should obey in all things to which such authority legitimately extends, and in whatsoever manner those who have this authority may command him.

And first, he must obey everyone invested with lawful authority. You understand me ; everyone, whatever may be his age, either his age in years, or his age in religion, whatever may be his character, whatever may be his experience, or even his virtue. I like, in all these matters, to quote St. Ignatius. “As,” he writes, “one ought not to obey a Superior, because he is prudent, good, endowed with fine qualities, or enriched with Divine gifts,—so, if a Superior has but little judgment, or prudence, it is not a reason for rendering him a less perfect obedience ; for, whoever he may be, he represents Him Whose wisdom is infallible, and God will not fail to make up to you what may be wanting in his minister.”* It is in the same spirit that St. Peter had

* Superiori nec si prudentiâ bonitate, cæterisve quibuslibet divinis donis ornatus instructusque sit propterea obtemperandum, sed ob id solùm quòd vices gerat Dei... nec contrà si consilio aut

said, writing to all the faithful, "Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Pet. ii. 18).

For you who are in Religion, this last case is at least rare. Your Superiors bear the name of Father or of Mother, and it is what they generally are, more in heart than even in name. If it should happen, however, that the power to whom you are subject is exercised by some one who is cold, ungracious, or exacting, you ought still, in this hard but consecrated hand, to recognise, adore, and kiss the ever sweet Hand of the good God.

The Latin Church, you know, consecrates the Eucharist with unleavened bread; the Greek Church consecrates with bread that is leavened. The leavened bread is not so white as the unleavened, it is also more rough to the touch; but after the consecration, what matters this outward difference? Jesus is on the Greek Altar, as on the Latin Altar: the East and West, both render to Him, the same duties.

Further, in monasteries, and especially in congregations, the entire government never resides in a single person. As the higher Superiors are regularly delegated by the Sovereign Pontiff, or, in certain cases, by the Bishop, they themselves delegate their powers to subaltern Superiors. Whether these aids are given them by election, or chosen by themselves, it little matters, from the moment that this subordination is conformable to rule. The power which is in the highest Superiors passes to others without quitting those from whom it emanates;

prudentiâ minis valeat, quidquam idcirco de obedientiâ est remittendum, quatenus ille superior est, quando illius personam refert cujus sapientia falli non potest, supplebitque ipse quidquid ministro defuerit.—S. Ignat. Epist. 29 ad Conimb.

and it passes to them in the proportions required by the dignities which are conferred on them, or the offices to which they are deputed. These are particular hierarchies imitating that great hierarchy, of which we have spoken, deriving their inspirations from it, and contributing to its work.

Now, in whatever degree any person participates in the power, that person, in the exact measure of this participation, is as much to be respected in God, as he who possesses it entirely. The crucifix you carry, is not nearly so large as that which surmounts the tabernacle of your church : yet you render no less honour to the one than to the other ; and you are right, since both represent the same Jesus. Thus you owe in proportion, the same obedience to the last of those who are delegated to an office, as to him who delegates it, and in truth, as to God Himself, the principle of all delegation.

We easily forget this, and why? Always from want of faith. How often it happens that an order by being transmitted, is less well received ; that a person using his authority and fulfilling his duty, regulates a matter in an employment which has been entrusted to him ; but how frequently it happens that this regulation is not accepted, or it is accepted with murmuring, if not with contempt? To obey a Superior or a Superioress, appears a very simple thing : it seems that we are dishonoured if we yield to any other power, especially when we count more years in religion than he who exercises this authority over us, and still more so, when we have exercised this authority ourselves. It is to resemble those who would be less respectful to the Holy Eucharist, because, instead of being borne by a priest, as it is the custom and the rule to do, it is borne by a deacon, as it happens in an extraordinary

case, or even by a layman, as has been done in times of persecution.

True obedience, extending to every person in possession of legitimate power, extends also to everything that such persons legitimately command. We say legitimately, for it is not a question of obedience "at random," says St. Francis of Sales,* and St. Thomas teaches, that as obedience is sufficient when we submit in matters of obligation, as it becomes perfect when it is rendered in all things wherein it is lawful, it would be indiscreet if it is rendered in what is not lawful."† It is manifest, then, that as we ought not to obey any human authority whatsoever, contrary to the law or to the order of God, neither ought we to obey any subordinate authority, whose commands would be contrary to the declared will of a power which, though human, would rank higher in the hierarchical order. With this exception, which, in the religious life, is of rare occurrence, obedience should extend to everything, to temporal matters and to spiritual, to what is exterior and what is interior, to the acts of the community and to acts of individuals, to what should be done or left undone, to what gives satisfaction and to what is displeasing. We are speaking of spiritual and interior acts, as certain prayers, certain practices of devotion, certain acts of the understanding and of the will. "In fact," says Suarez, "the Superior has always the right to exact such acts, when he judges them useful to the progress of the soul he governs. If this soul is given up to him, it is doubtless that he may form it to

* Conversation ii.

† Sic ergò potest triplex obedientia distingui : una sufficiens ad salutem quæ scilicet obedit in his ad quæ obligatur : alia perfecta quæ obedit in omnibus licitis : alia indiscreta quæ etiam in illicitis obedit.—2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. 3, ad. 3.

perfection." Now, these interior acts are essential for this purpose; "and it is especially in this," continues the great theologian, "that the vow of obedience is superior to the two other vows of religion; for these latter vows only yield to God what is exterior, but the vow of obedience renders Him Master of the interior."*

But among so many sacrifices that authority may impose upon you, there are two which ordinarily appear less easy to bear, and, at the same time, less necessary: the one regards your employments, and the other the matter of dispensations. There are some good Religious, but who have not much clearness of perception—who easily imagine that an office, though imposed on them by obedience, is injurious to their perfection. They do not wish to have its responsibility, they fevently desire greater leisure; they cannot occupy themselves so busily for their neighbour without neglecting themselves, which is clearly running a risk of losing their souls, if it is not actually doing so. Their reasons, I know, come in swarms, and the mind is besieged with them. If the question arises of a dispensation, they say they are quite well, and certainly better than anyone else—they have tried their strength, and they have no need of any help. The doctor does not know the importance of keeping the rule, the infirmarian is alarmed without ground, the

* De perfectione acquirendâ agitur et ad eam obtinendam religiosus se tradit superiori tanquàm ab eo informandum. Porro sive quia contemplativa vita, quæ ad perfectionem maximè necessaria est, in his actibus maximè consistit, sive quia ad moderationem internorum affectuum sine quâ non obtinetur perfectio, media interna requiruntur, necesse est ut actus merè internos præcipere possit. . . . In hoc maximè duo alia religionis vota excedit votum obedientiæ quod non jam res exteriores, sed interiorem voluntatem Deo offert.—Suarez; De Stat. Relig., lib. x., cap. 9.

Superior is too paternal. If it be a question of any law of the Church, it is still worse. Does one come to a monastery to do less penance than is done in the world? Besides, would they not become more ill by their going so dead against the rule, than they would be, by its strict observance? And then, what is the gain? Illusions, all of them! We are not now speaking of certain humble and discreet observations, which may, and sometimes ought, to be made, and of which we shall say a word presently; but setting this aside, we say, that in presence of a very decided and manifest will of Superiors, one who is truly obedient discharges peaceably whatever employment is given him, and regards the most rigid regularity as not so valuable as the dispensation, which is ordained for him by obedience. He prays enough who obeys; he who obeys does sufficient penance; to do nothing when inaction is ordered, is to do all one ought to do; and to do much by one's own choice, to fast, to sing the Divine office, to pass whole nights in prayer, to take the discipline to blood, to give great alms, to convert the world, if it were possible,—all this, so far as one's own advancement, at least, is concerned, is simply to do nothing at all. Remember the case of Esther. Admitted to the number of the young virgins, among whom Assuerus was to elect his Spouse, she let her companions choose their own ornaments for themselves. For herself, modest, indifferent, docile, she took those that were offered to her. Now, what happened? "The king," saith the Scripture, "loved her more than all the rest, and set upon her head the royal crown" (Esther ii. 17). Do you remain, also, in this simplicity of obedience: it is the way which leads to the throne—not to the throne of an earthly king, but to that of the King of Kings. Apart

from the will of God signified by your Superiors, all is for you empty as a cloud and dangerous as a precipice. On the contrary, whatever this blessed voice of authority says to you, open your ear and obey. Say to yourselves that each action which is prescribed to you, is as an appointed place of holy meeting, which God deigns to assign to you. You will find Him there as the Samaritan woman found Jesus at the well of Jacob : He is there with His grace, with His strength, with His sweet love, with the living water which quenches your thirst for ever, and which becomes to those who drink it, a "fountain," springing up into everlasting life (St. John iv. 7—14)—in a word, He is there ; it is to say all. You will find Him at these appointed places of meeting, and, indeed, will you find Him at all elsewhere ?

Doing thus all that is commanded you according to your rule, do all in the manner in which it is commanded you. I speak of the place, of the time, of the measure—in a word, of all the circumstances to be observed in the action which is prescribed for you. Oh, how dear are these details to love ! How they are valued by love ! Are they not, too, in other respects the threads of which the tissue of our life is made ? Take away any of these details—what remains of your life in practice ? Take a religious care, then, of details. Common sense will, perhaps, whisper to you that this is attending to trifles : reply boldly, that these are delicate matters. You know the value of this delicacy in friendship, a hundred times more precious than great services. Delicacy is the flower of the heart and the perfume of the affections. Give to God this perfume and this flower. I should rather say, return them to Him ; for, besides that all the delicacy you can ever have must necessarily come from Him,

consider how much of it He has manifested to you, and does still daily manifest in His relations with you. The care of God, the little attentions of God, the marvellous opportuneness of His succours, the exquisite perfections of His kindnesses ; in a word, His delicacy : this is what the heart feels deeply when it is pure and enlightened ; but what lips can declare it ? You also take care of every particular in your actions, especially in those of obedience. Is it not thus that Jesus did ? Consider Him, follow Him in His life. There was nothing He retarded, nothing He precipitated ; there was nothing to be added, nothing to be retrenched ; there was nothing neglected, and He did not leave this world till having passed over in His Divine mind and memory all the types He was to realise, all the prophecies He had to fulfil, all the laws He was to observe, all the services He had to render, all the graces He was to merit, all the examples He had to give ; in a word, all the parts of that immense work which the adorable Will of His Father had confided to Him, He could testify of Himself that His obedience had been universal, and He could exclaim when dying, “all is consummated” (St. John xix. 30).

Finally, as we have told you, rendering obedience to all and for all the things commanded, render it also, whatever may be the form or even the extent of the commandment. Doubtless, if the order is not formal, you may disobey it without violating your vow.* Doubtless, if in declaring his will to you, your Superior does not intend to bind your conscience, your want of submission does not charge you with any disobedience, properly so called. But, supposing in this, you have committed no

* Suarez, *loc. cit.* cap. 7.

fault against the vow of obedience, you may have sinned against the virtue ; and supposing that if you have not sinned against the virtue of obedience, you would not be sure that you had not failed in some other of your duties ; and is it not understood that in the religious life, not to offend God is not sufficient, since by the very fact of your state, you ought to strive after perfection, and how can you strive after perfection, if your justice does not habitually abound ? Let, then, a will prudently presumed, be, for you, a will made known ; let a counsel decide you as quickly as a precept, and let a simple desire act upon you as a real command.*

We come thus to speak of that total submission which is the last point we have to treat, and which, well put in practice, will bring your obedience to its highest perfection.

David said of himself, "Shall not my soul be subject to God, for from Him is my salvation" (Ps. lxi. 2)? He might have spoken of the rights of the Creator ; you have seen what they are, and how far they extend. But as, in the moral life, it is the heart which decides things, and our heart is more surely gained by the kindness of the Benefactor, than by the majesty of the Sovereign ; knowing besides his own weakness and ours, knowing also the supreme importance of that submission which he preaches to us while preaching it to himself, the holy king gives us the most triumphant reasons for it. My salvation, he says, is from God : Jesus goes forth from the Bosom of this God with Whom I treat ; it is love which promulgates the right and charges itself with the acceptance

* *Nunquàm expectat, sed solam prælati voluntatem sciens vel credens, ferventer exsequitur pro præcepto.*—B. Alb. Magn. de Virtut., cap. 3.

of the power. All the good I can desire or conceive has its source in Him Who commands me, and who makes my submission the condition of my happiness. Shall I not then, be subject to Him, subject without reserve, and for ever? Shall I keep in my own power for any use whatever independently of Him any part whatsoever of my will, any part whatsoever of my judgment, and much more, of the faculties of the body? For by nature the soul is the queen within me: if the queen obeys, why should not the servants obey too? O my God, my Saviour, shall there be anything in me, which is not subject to you?

This is, in religion especially, what each one should say; and, to go from what is less to what is more considerable, shall we not be, first of all, faithful, exact, punctual, fervent in exterior obedience, that is to say, in the execution of the act commanded? I do not say, shall we resist, but shall we even give an occasion to reiterate the order? Oh! how little love has he, who, hearing the footsteps of a friend on the threshold of his house, does not open the door to him at once, but obliges him to keep waiting outside! When a Superior intimates to you his order, or even expresses his desire, what is this to faith, but the Heavenly Friend Who says to you: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Apoc. iii. 20), "Open to me, my sister, my love, my Spouse" (Cant. v. 2). I have said to you from my heart, "knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (St. Matt. vii. 7). Shall it be said of you, that when I knock in my turn, you refuse to open to me? Away, then, with disputations and sullen obedience, which must be taken by assault, by the assault of formal precepts, or, at least, must be purchased by words without number, and entreaties without end. "If

thou sound but once (the trumpet)," said God to Moses, "the heads of the people of Israel shall come to thee; but if you wish to move the multitude, the sound of the trumpets must be plain and unbroken" (Numb. x. 4). Chosen flock of Jesus Christ, religious souls, virgins consecrated to God, princesses of the heavenly Court, do you wish to be ruled as the profane multitude are governed? "Let a single sound, a single word be sufficient: obey the first sign without fear, without delay, without indifference," admirably observes St. Benedict:* "without fear, because God is with the docile soul, and because, being strong in this companionship, the obedient soul shall speak of victories" (Prov. xxi. 28); "without delay, because the word of the Lord is rapid in its course," says St. Bernard (following the Royal Prophet), "and that it wishes to see you run, as those who aim at following it; † in fine, without indifference, with alacrity, because to obey God is to give to Him, and God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). No more questions, no more examination: to permit oneself to do this in such a matter, says Peter of Blois, is presumptuously to taste the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; ‡ the human race knows the cost of doing this. "Hast thou seen a man swift in his work? he shall stand before kings," says the wise man (Prov. xxii. 29). Never, then, object that you have this or that to do.

* *Hæc ipsa obedientia tunc acceptabilis erit Deo et dulcis hominibus si quod jubetur non trepidè, non tardè, non tepidè . . . efficiatur.*—Reg. S. Bened. cap. 5.

† "*Velociter currit sermo ejus*" (Psalm cxlvii.) et velocem desiderat habere sequentem.—S. Bern. Serm. xli. de Div.

‡ *Quid vel quale vel quantum sit quod injungitur, non discernat. Alioquin præsumit comedere de ligno scientiæ boni et mali.*—Petr. Bles. Epist. 134.

The bell that rings, the rule which speaks, the Superior who makes a sign, is Jesus, Who says, "I wish it." When Jesus says, "I wish," what have you to do but to obey? "Keep your hands free," concludes St. Benedict, "leave your work unfinished, and with a swift foot, run to do whatever is commanded you."*

Our old masters love to compare Religious to birds. Even when they alight on the ground, they only perch there; at the least noise they fly away. Wherever you are, whatever you do, be like the birds, and do not take root anywhere. This root is an irregular attachment to something which occupies you; this root is inattention, immortification dwelling in yourself—indolence. How easily you would obey if your heart was always on high! Look at the Saints; look at Abraham, at Samuel, at Joseph! They are ready night as well as day (Gen. xxii. 3). The sleep of their eyelids only allowed their hearts to watch. "I sleep," says the Spouse in the Canticles, "but my heart watcheth" (Cant. v. 2). God speaks, they stand up; God finishes His Word, they are already engaged in executing His orders. It is while thinking of them St. Bernard wrote: "He who is truly obedient does not know of delays; he has a horror of to-morrow; he does not know what an obstacle is; he anticipates the command; he keeps his eyes attentive, his ears open, his tongue ready to speak, his hands ready to act, his feet ready to move forward; he is wholly recollected and prepared to execute, the moment it is made known to him, the will of his Superior."† And when he has known

* *Illi tales relinquentes statim quæ sua sunt et voluntatem propriam deserentes, mox exoccupatis manibus et quod agebant imperfectum relinquentes, vicino obedientiæ pede jubentis vocem factis sequuntur.*—Reg. S. Benedict., cap. 5.

† *Fidelis obediens nescit moras, fugit crastinum, ignorat tardi-*

this blessed will, he not only executes it, but he never forgets it; every order, every decision, every intention is indelibly engraven on his memory, and it never occurs to him to think that because a rule is not again and again and incessantly recalled to mind it should therefore fall into disuse. In fine, what can I tell you more than the Saints have said, and, since the Saints have said it, why should I not repeat it? The truly obedient, the truly good Religious, is a tool in the hands of the workman,* the staff in the hands of the traveller; he makes no more resistance than a dead body.†

Before all, then, fidelity, punctuality, promptitude in exterior obedience; but afterwards, and especially sincere, submission of the will, a full and cordial adhesion to the will which commands. In this consists the very soul of obedience, and consequently its life, for God is not satisfied with dead victims. If the inside of the cup is not clean, what matters the outside? (St. Matt. xxiii. 25).

When you bend your knees, if your soul remains erect, what homage have you rendered? All the glory of the King's daughter is within you (Ps. xlv. 14). When you

tatem, præripit præcipientem, parat oculos visui, aures auditui, linguam voci, manus operi, itineri pedes: totum se colligit ut imperantis colligat voluntatem. Serm. xli., de div.—Our Lord gave on this point this instruction to St. Catherine of Sienna: "All ought to be given up for obedience; so that if you were raised to so high and perfect union with Me, that your body was separated from the earth, you ought, if obedience claimed you, to do all you could to obey."—Dialog. clxv.

* "Sicut faber aut ædificator unoquoque suæ artis instrumento utitur pro suo arbitrio. . . ita addecet religiosum velut instrumentum suo artifice ad consummationem spiritualis ædificii in omnibus obedire."—S. Basil. Constit. Monast., cap. 23.

† Perindè ac baculus. . . perindè ac cadaver. S. Ignat. Loy. Constit. p. vi., § 1., Reg. 36.]

are told to be as docile as an instrument, this is not meant of a mechanical obedience, but of an obedience which has its source in the will. The instrument here is before all—your soul; and it is your liberty which ought to subject it thus. “Obey from your heart,” says St. Paul. “All other obedience is not worthy to be called virtue;”^{*} and since you only vow what is of a certain excellence, how would this submission of body become the matter of a vow, especially of this vow which surpasses all the others.

When then you do a work which is commanded you, incline yourself to it, apply yourself, constrain yourself to will it, to love it, to do it precisely because it is commanded. Place your own will under that of your Superior, as the horse is under the horseman who mounts it and directs it; attach your heart to the precept, as the boat is attached to the vessel which tows it; remain loyally, profoundly, totally dependent, receiving from authority every movement, as Jesus received His from His Father (St. John v. 19).

“If the work commanded pleases you, take care,” says St. Gregory the Great, “not to allow yourself to be allured by the attraction you feel. Act by virtue, never by passion, and never either by routine. He who pleases himself in obeying, annihilates his obedience.”[†] If, on the contrary, the work which is commanded is painful,

^{*} Si molestè cœperis sustinere, si murmurare in corde, etiam si exteriùs impleas quod jubetur, non est hæc virtus patientiæ sed velamentum malitiæ. S. Bern., Sermon. iii., de Circumcis. Illa obedientiæ forma quæ mandata duntaxat opera exsequitur virtutis nomine minimè digna est.—S. Ignat., Epist. j. cit. ad Conimbr.

[†] Obedientiæ sibi virtutem evacuat qui ad hæc (scilicet prospera) etiam et proprio desiderio anhelat.—S. Greg., M. Moral., lib. xxxv., cap. 13 (Vet).

set about it energetically ; so that when there is question of suffering, your obedience may have the glory of even loving that pain, which it might seem sufficient to accept ; and that where God prescribes what might flatter your nature, your voluntary indifference may enable you to overcome the pleasure, and give to your obedience all its merit, with all its purity.* Besides, you should fear in this matter an illusion into which it is easy and very common to fall. I mean to say when by skilful representations, by sophisms more or less varnished by complaints, by prayers, or by some other similar means, you get your Superiors to ordain or to counsel what you desire yourself. This is to overturn all order, to falsify your obedience, and at least to render it sterile. Hear St. Bernard : “ If desiring an object,” he says, “ you labour, whether secretly or openly, to make your spiritual Father grant it to you, do not flatter yourself that your obedience is shown in such a matter ; you only deceive yourself. He who governs in such a case is no longer your superior, but yourself.”†

Finally, when God laid down His great precept, the Alpha and the Omega of the law, its perfection, its fulness, He said, “ You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, with all your heart, and with all your mind ” (Deut. vi. 5 ; St. Matt. xxii. 37). You have seen

* *Debet obedientia et in adversis de suo aliquid habere et rursùm in prosperis ex suo aliquid omnimodò non habere ; quatenùs et in adversis tantò sit gloriosior quantò divino ordini etiam ex desiderio conjungitur, et in prosperis tantò sit verior, quantò à præsentì quam divinitùs percipit glorià funditùs ex mente separatur.—Id. *ibid.**

† “ Quisquis vel apertè vel occultè satagit ut quod habet in voluntate, hoc ei spiritualis pater injungat, ipse se seducit, si fortè sibi quasi de obedientià blandiatur. Neque enim in eâ re ipse prælato, sed magis ei prælatus obedit.”—S. Bern., *Serm. xxxv., de Divers.*

how loving God practically is to obey Him (Duet. xi. 13 St. John xiv. 23). Love is a fire, obedience is its flame; the one does not exist without the other. God, then, expresses the same truth in equivalent terms; you shall obey with all your soul, with all your heart, and with all your mind. To devote yourself, to obey with all your soul, or, as it is written in another place, with all your strength (St. Luke x. 27), is to execute promptly, courageously, and with constancy what is ordered; to set about obeying with all your heart, is to submit your will to the will of your Superior; to obey with all your mind is clearly to yield your own judgment to his. And, in truth, this is the culminating point of obedience. All in Religion are bound thus far to obey, and this obligation is essential. "If the obedience of the judgment is at fault," says St. Ignatius, "farewell to perfect obedience, farewell to simplicity, farewell to humility, farewell to courage and strength, farewell, in a word, to all the vigour, to all the efficacy, to all the dignity of this great virtue."* Either you belie your profession, or you are holocausts. "Now, he who pretends to immolate himself to God entirely," continues this great Saint, "ought necessarily to deliver to Him not only His will, but his intelligence, so that he has but one and the same judgment with his Superiors as he has with them, but one and the same will."† "He must," says St. Francis of

* Si deest obedientia iudicii... perit obedientiæ perfectio... perit exsequendi studium et celeritas... perit illa celebris obedientiæ cæcæ simplicitas... perit humilitas... perit in rebus arduis fortitudo, perit denique, ut summam complectar, hujus virtutis vis omnis ac dignitas.—S. Ignat., Epist. ad Conimb.

† Qui se totum penitus immolare vult Deo, præter voluntatem intelligentiam quoque offerat necesse est : ut non solum idem velit sed etiam ut idem sentiat quod superior ejusque iudicio subjiciat

Sales, "approve all that his Superiors do and say, permit or forbid. Inferiors ought always to believe, and in their judgment acknowledge, that Superiors act rightly, and that they have good reasons for what they do."*

In the person of these two Saints you have all the doctors of the Church.

Doubtless, it is not a question of that first appreciation of things which the mind makes at the moment of apprehending them ; this is more an impression than an act ; in every case it is not an act sufficiently free, to fall under the moral law. The question is here of an appreciation reflected upon, voluntary and absolute, in a word, of a judgment. Now, we say that except the almost imaginary case of a manifest error against faith, or of an order contrary to the moral law, the inferior ought always to judge that the Superior is right, and that the thing commanded is good.

But is this you will ask me the conduct of a reasonable being. I pass over the case of forgetfulness of the reason which my Superior gives ; but if I see positively that he is wrong, to yield to him exteriorly is very meritorious ; but if you ask me still to approve it, in my own judgment, is it not to require of my mind a sort of suicide, and is not such suicide absurd, immoral, impossible ? There are many replies to make to this question ; and first that of St. Augustine, "Are you Christians ? and, if you are, what name do you bear ? that of reasonable beings, or that of the faithful ? You are called the faithful."† It is not, then, your human

sum, quoad potest devota voluntas intelligentiam inflectere.—S. Ignat. ibid.

* Conversations xi.

† Non vocamini rationales sed fideles.

reason that gives you your chief designation. But it is that other name, after which you are called, that name which comes from on high which is more precious, more fundamental, and which, to say all, is Divine, since it is divinely inspired: "If anyone among you seemeth to be wise," saith St. Paul, "let him become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18). Shall we blush at the Gospel? Shall we banish from Christianity the folly of the Cross? Shall we fear, and shall we ever cease, to scandalise human wisdom? However, if we must condescend, and speak after the manner of men, as St. Paul did so often (Rom. vi. 19), we shall say: Yes, what you are commanded to do, is eminently reasonable.

First, if you are in the truth (and you are not so unless you are humble), you will greatly distrust your own judgment. It is feeble and limited, and many ill-regulated passions, without your knowing it, cast their shadows over your mind, however clear-sighted it may naturally be. "Lean not upon thy own prudence," saith the Wise Man (Prov. iii. 5). This lesson is for all; and, further, were your own view as sure as you think, it is clear that, being an inferior, you are not in a good position for forming a judgment; for it is from on high, from above, and from viewing things on all sides, that we are able duly to appreciate them. Thus your Superiors form their judgments about them. They may have, in order to take this or that side, twenty motives of general interest, that are necessarily hidden from you. They have also, by habit, more wisdom than you, and more experience as well, for it is not the custom to select for the art of governing those who are the least capable and the least worthy. And if the Apostle wishes, that by humility every Christian should esteem his brethren as his Su-

periors (Philipp. ii. 3), how far does this duty extend with regard to Superiors by their office? Finally, consider the special graces which God gives them to govern, graces which are special lights, and which you want, because they are attached to offices; how many accumulated reasons have your Superiors for being right, and which oblige you, therefore, in case you differ from them, to prefer their judgment to your own? Take notice that the Holy Spirit tells us, in a manner which seems absolute, "Judge not against a judge, for he judgeth according to that which is just" (Eccles. viii. 17).

But, you continue, if this reasoning is good, then Superiors are infallible. That they are rarely mistaken, very rarely, this may be; but, however, since they may be mistaken, I may see that they *are* mistaken; and if I really see it, why force my mind to find good sense in a command which wants it?

Where are the little children, the simple and artless souls, the disciples of the crib, the solitaries of the olden time, the first religious of St. Francis of Assisium? Where are the perfectly obedient? May it please our Lord that in this matter all Religious may become blind! Is there a holy Doctor who has not preached blind obedience? * O happy blindness! O happy night! night of faith and humility! night which, in the Eyes of God, is resplendent as the day (Ps. cxxxviii. 12). But once more we will condescend, and we will speak to you once more after a human manner.

In spite of your good will, in spite of all your efforts, you cannot prevent yourself from seeing that a command which is given you is unreasonable. Well, execute it

* See especially St. Francis of Sales in the colloquy, so often quoted.

nevertheless, everyone is master of his own movements ; then, force your body to obey. Then, conform your will to that of your Superior ; you can do this also, for (whatever the mind may say) we wish absolutely what we wish. Finally, since your mind cannot refrain from forming some judgment, leaving the order for what it may be worth, consider what is best to be done, what is the most reasonable, the only reasonable thing you can do (because that alone is conformable to the engagements of your holy profession), and this is to obey the order though it does not seem to you to be a reasonable one. To the Superior belongs discernment, say the Saints, to the inferior, obedience.* God will demand of the one how he has governed, of the other how he has obeyed. This practical judgment once formed, keep to it absolutely, and for fear of forming another, forbid yourself to think of the nature of the act commanded. If the thought of it returns, if it solicits your attention, if it besieges you, which will happen as long as you are young in virtue, treat it as you would do every other useless, dangerous, or even forbidden thought ; struggle against it, as you would against all temptation, courageously, and patiently, and do not lay down your arms till you have completely conquered it. Is this impossible ? Is this difficult ? is it anything too much ? You see an object which is black ; you are not required to regard it as white : you are only told not to look at the object at all. A child may do this. Follow, then, this rule ; never depart from this rule, and this is how you will practise obedience of the judgment, how your mind will be sacrificed to God as well as your heart, and how nothing essential will be wanting in your submission.

* Discernere superioris est, obedire inferioris.—Epist. ad Fratres de Monte Dei. Int. opp. S. Bernard.

But (ah ! how sweet is the yoke of Jesus Christ, and how free are the servants of God !), if in face of a superior will—known, indeed, but which you presume is not yet finally fixed—you feel your spirit swell and your heart faint ; if even, having commenced to obey, it appears to you that the undertaking decidedly surpasses your strength, or subjects you to some notable inconvenience, do not fear to represent it to your Superior. If your father or your mother in religion has a share in the authority of God, they have also some portion of His Wisdom ; and, above all, of His goodness. Go, then, and expose to them your difficulty : far from detracting from the perfection of your obedience, this simplicity will also increase it ; and, practising thus several virtues at once, you will please God more. However, before acting, pray, reflect, test yourself ; wait, if you can, for some time, in order to make sure that you are not giving way to caprice, to imagination, to idleness. Having prudently made up your mind to speak, do it very humbly, discreetly, tranquilly, saying what is in your mind, but keeping your will in entire indifference. Be prepared for the failure, as for the success of the step you have taken ; welcome with the same countenance, refusal and consent ; and if your Superior does not judge fit to grant your request, if he persists in his first intention, do not doubt then that you should act on his determination, that it is best for you to do so ; see in it without hesitation, the Divine Will, and, with confidence in His grace, have no further anxiety in your mind, but to obey.*

* Si cui fratri aliqua forte gravia aut impossibilia injunguntur, suscipiat quidem jubentis imperium cum omni mansuetudine et obedientiâ. Quod si omninò virium suarum mensuram viderit pondus

We are much deceived if the Christian spirit which is in you has not given testimony to all these truths we have now announced to you, and to the great number of rules we have just established. They are so clear, so simple, so discreet, so salutary, and, most of all, so reliable, that there is no possible objection to them ; and if the mind has no objection, how can the heart resist ? Do not cause any schism between love and light. All that you see is true, love it ; all that you love, that is good, do it. Obedience is the necessary homage of man to his Creator ; it resumes and characterises all his religion in His regard ; it truly constitutes his justice ; it makes him love individually and socially ; it renders him good, wise, free, holy, and happy ; by a way that is short and infallibly sure, which leads him to perfection and to salvation. Give, then, to God this glory, to Jesus Christ this proof of love, to the Church this joy, to your community this lustre and power, to your own soul this inestimable profit of an obedience which shall be perfect, invariable, and persevering.

The incomparable St. Ignatius of Atioch wrote to the people of Ephesus : “ Be zealous to obey the Bishop. United to, and in agreement with him, you, illustrious priests, and truly worthy of God, are like the strings attached to a harp. . . Enter all of you into this harmony, in order that, bound together and tuned in chorus, in that unity which is the music of God, you may all have but one voice, to chant together to your Heavenly Father, *oneris excedere, impossibilitatis suæ causas ei qui sibi præest patienter et opportunè suggerat, non superbiendo aut resistendo vel contradicendo. Quod si post suggestionem suam in suâ sententiâ prioris imperium perseveraverit, sciat junior sibi expedire, et ex charitate, confidens de adjutorio Dei, obediat.*—Reg. S. Bened., cap. lxviii.

that holy hymn, of which Jesus is the Leader and Composer. The Father will hear you, and, judging you by your good works, will recognise you as the true members of His Son."*

Faithful souls, to whom we have just now spoken, if, by a constant habit founded on the light of faith, and on an unshaken resolution you are in accordance with your rule, submissive to your Superiors, and united in this submission, you are like the holy Clergy of Ephesus: God necessarily takes in you His delight, for you make that harmony to resound upon earth which is heard in Heaven, that harmony which is the created echo of the eternal harmony, I mean that of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in the fixed and immovable order of their mutual relations, and in the unity of their Essence.

* Decet vos in episcopi sententiam concurrere, quod et facitis. Nam memorabile presbyterium vestrum, dignum Deo, ita coaptatum est episcopo ut chordæ citharæ... sed et vos singuli chorus estote ut, consoni per concordiam, melos Dei recipientes in unitate cantetis voce unâ per Jesum Christum Deo Patri: quo et vos audiat et agnoscat, ex eis quæ bene operamini, membra esse vos Filii ipsius.—S. Ignat. Antioch., Epist. ad Ephes. 4.



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